JAINA ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE OF TAMILNADU

Editor

A. Ekambaranathan

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Publishers Note

Jainism is a system of religious thought enunciated by the Tirthankaras who strove for the betterment of humanity. There are hundreds of monuments, epigraphs and manuscripts in different parts of India and in different languages. It is our endeavour to preserve these Jaina Monuments and vestiges for the posterity. It is in this connection that the Mahasabha came forward to sponsor the seminar on "Jaina Archaeological Heritage of Tamilnadu" and also to publish the papers in the form of the book with the permission of the authorities of the University of Madras.

The Mahasabha is verymuch thankful to the University of Madras for having entrusted this publication work. Our thanks are also due to Prof. Dr. A. Ekambaranathan, Head of the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology and Prof. S. Thanyakumar of Jain Youth Forum, for the efforts in organising the seminar and the publication.

It is our earnest hope and wish that this book will be useful to all those interested in various aspects connected with Jainism in the southern part of peninsular India.

M.K. JAIN
Working President (South Zone)
Shri Bharat Varshiya Digamber Jain
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PREFACE

Tamilnadu has a plethora of Jaina archaeological wealth such as Sramana caves, temples, stone sculptures, bronze images, paintings, epigraphical documents and manuscripts. They throw a flood of light on the socio, economic and religious life of the Jaina community and bespeak of the glorious heritage of the past. However, there is a paucity of published works on these potential Jaina archaeological vestiges. Hence, inorder to highlight the importance of the rich heritage of the Jainas of Tamilnadu and to encourage budding scholars to pursue intensive research on various aspects connected with Jainism in the southern part of peninsular India, a Seminar was organised in October 2004 by the Department of Ancient History & Archaeology, University of Madras in collaboration with the All India Digamber Jain (Teerth Sanrakshni) Mahasabha, Lucknow. Shri M.K. JAIN, M.Sc. (Eng.), M.S.(U.S.A.), the South Zone Working President of the Mahasabha, was very kind enough to bear the entire expenses towards the conduct of the Seminar and the publication of the papers presented in a book form, for which act of benevolence, I am deeply beholden. I am also thankful to the authorities of the University of Madras for having given permission to publish this work.

The present volume contains ten research papers presented by scholars in the seminar on different aspects of Jaina archaeological heritage of Tamilnadu. I am sure, this work will be a welcome addition to the study of Jainology and Archaeology as well.

A. Ekambaranathan

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1

EARLY JAINA CAVES

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The earliest architectural activities in Tamilnadu commences with the Jaina natural caverns that have been discovered in many parts of Tamilnadu. These natural caverns served as abodes of the Jaina monks. More than one hundred caverns have been brought to light so far. Situated at inaccessible heights, these caverns are found in the hill ranges that dot the districts of Madurai, Tirunelveli, Pudukkottai, Vellore and Villupuram. These caverns are characterized by the presence of polished stone beds and a drip ledge cut into the boulder at the top to prevent the entry of rain water. Their association with Jaina ascetics is ascertained from the brahmi inscriptions found in these caverns. In the present study, only those caverns that have early Brahmi inscriptions are taken into consideration. This category is mainly confined to the hill ranges in and around Madurai, Pudukkottai and Tirunelveli. Some of the important amongst these are enumerated here.

Arittapatti

Arittapatti is a village situated 8 kms. from Melur on the road to Alagarkoil from Madurai. About

4 kms to the north west of this village is a hillock called Kalinjamalai. On the eastern face of the hill is a cavern with a drip ledge cut into the outer face of the rock. On the brow of the cave is found a Brahmi inscription dated to 2nd - 1st. centuries B.C. It records that the cave was caused to be given by Cheliyan Attananvoliyan of Nelveli.[1] The place Nelveli may be identified with the modern Tirunelveli.

Arittapatti continued to be a flourishing Jaina center even in the 9th century A.D. as is attested to, by an image of a seated Tirthankara, canopied by a triple umbrella.

Mangulam

A village near Arittapatti, Mangulam is adjacent to a range of hills locally known as Kalugumalai. Atop the steep ascent of rocky slopes are five caverns with rock cut beds and Brahmi inscriptions. Four of these caverns are inscribed upon while three of them have smoothly chiseled beds cut on the bottom rock. The beds are generally found to run in different directions. The overhanging boulder, inaccessible due to its height, bears the inscriptions in bold characters. In the lowermost cavern the inscription is on another boulder, which incidentally forms the backwall of the northern portion. Unlike other caverns, this possesses an unsheltered sandy courtyard, hence no beds are found here. The southern part of the cavern extends to a depth of 49' 5" between two boulders serving as walls. The curvaceous cavern is 58' in length and its height is approximately. 11' at the opening. On the platform are nearly thirty one beds situated both inside and outside. In the last cavern is a centrally cut out bed on a higher level measuring 7'8" by 5', which was probably meant for the chief among the Sramanas.

The cluster of caverns which formed the monastic establishment at Mangulam was presided over by a reputed monk called Kaninanta. Several stone beds were caused to be made in these caves by Kadalanvaluti, an officer of the Pandyan king Nedunjeliyan, Chatikan and Ilanchatikan, brother-in law and nephew respectively of the same king.[2] Besides, the members of the merchant guild of Tiruvellarai also had evinced keen interest in this monastery and provided lattice work to the abode of Kaninanta.[3] It is to be noted that the Mangulam inscriptions are the earliest epigraphs mentioning the name of the Pandyan king Nedunjeliyan, who figures prominently in some of the Sangam classics.

Kilavalavu

Kilavalavu is situated at a distance of 10 kms from Melur. About 1.6 kms southwest of the Kilavalavu village is a hill with huge boulders with narrow bases gradually spreading as they rise into spacious tops. The boulders all round are chiseled wherever the slopes run into the concave portions of the rock and shelters below it a number of beds, the pillow lofts of which converge to the base of the boulder and thereby give to the latter the appearance of petals spreading evenly from the stem of a lotus flower. A Brahmi inscription of 2nd century B.C. is engraved directly below a chiseled portion of the rock.[4] Similar boulders with numerous beds arranged in a circle round their narrow bases also exist in an adjoining hill and the openings all round are protected by pieces of piled up stone. The concentration of beds may probably indicate a heavy congregation of ascetics within a small radius.

Alagarmalai

Alagarmalai, situated at a distance of 20 kms north-east of Madurai, is adjacent to a range of hills

of the same name. On this range between Alagarmalai and Kidaripatti is a huge cavern with beds. The way to the cavern appears to have been of a precipitous rock with narrow steps. A spacious vault measuring 56 ft in length north to south, 20 feet in depth and 5'10" in height encompasses the remaining part of the cavern. A little higher up the brow of the sheltering boulder are the inscriptions engraved at an inaccessible height. There are totally 13 Tamil Brahmi inscriptions,[5] the largest number found in a single site and can be assigned to circa 1st century B.C. The stone beds are many and are of varying sizes scattered singly and in groups over the whole surface of the cavern. The biggest measures 8'7" by 3'1", while the smallest is 6'4" by 2' ¼". Neither are they cut deep into the rock nor the pillow lofts appreciably raised. There are holes for wooden posts by the side of the narrow steps. The Brahmi inscriptions reveal the names of the different craft persons. A little below the cavern containing the stone beds is a huge boulder with the beautiful image of a seated Tirthankara and a Vatteluttu inscription of the 9th century A.D. which records the work of having carved this sacred image was that of the Jaina preceptor Ajjjanandi.[6]

Tiruparankunram

Six rock cut beds are chiseled out on the western slope of the cavern on the Tiruparankunram hill, about 11 kms from Madurai. Of these, four are small ones roughly equal in size and two slightly bigger. The latter lie spreading east to west and are mutilated on their pillow sides. The four smaller ones are cut by the side of the other and are separated only by a very thin band of stone. They are too narrow even for a medium

sized human to stretch freely. On the pillow side of the small beds are engraved four Brahmi inscriptions datable to first century.[7] The over hanging rock across its full length of the margin is chiseled off and cut into a narrow ledge to drain off water. A similar groove cut into the floor at the broad entrance may have likewise served to drain the water from the sloping rock on the southern side of the cavern. The existence of foot holds leading to the cavern and the holes cut deep into the rock by their size were meant perhaps to receive poles which once supported the wooden railings. The perennial spring which can be reached by a flight of crude steps only a few yards down the northern side of the cavern served as source of water supply. A peculiar feature of this cavern is the presence of two low benches one measuring 5' by 1'9." and the other 6' by 3'. On the northern side of the hill is a smaller cave with two beds but without inscriptions.

Muttupatti

It is a hamlet of Vadapalangy in Madurai taluk. About 250m. east of it is a huge overhanging boulder sheltering about 30 beds. The cavern measures 43' east to west, 26' deep on the eastern side and about 5' in height. On the pillow side of 3 of the beds is a damaged Brahmi inscription and on the rounded margin of the sheltering rock are two others, better preserved. A detached boulder in this spacious cavern also contains a bed and a Brahmi inscription cut into it, but on rather rude surface. There is a groove in the boulder to drain off rain water.

The Brahmi records found in the caverns are assigned to the first two centuries of the Christian era.[8] One of them refers to a resident monk who was

the son of Cattan Antai of Nagaperur. Another epigraph mentions that the cavern was inhabited by Caiyalan of Vintaiyur. Muttupatti continued to be an important center of Jainism upto 9th century A.D. as can be seen from two Thirthankara images sculpted on a boulder nearby the caverns.

Kongarpuliyankulam

Near Kongarpuliyankulam which is about 15 kms. south-west of Madurai is a bald rock with a narrow cleft in which are found six caverns. On the rounded edge of the roof in one of these caverns are found three Brahmi inscriptions in bold characters of 2nd century B.C.[9] The inscriptions mention that Uparuvan, a lay devotee, provided a canopy to the monastry, while Ceruatan plaited the fronds of the canopy. The same canopy was caused to be thatched by Peratan Pitan who was a native of Pakanur. Thus the natural caverns had been provided with structural additions by the laity even in the 2nd century B.C. The next three caverns below this have six sets of beds generally without pillow lofts, stretching north to south. However, only four are in good state of preservation. One of the caverns consist of ten beds, another of six, the third of eight, the fourth of four, the fifth of three and in the sixth the beds are badly damaged. The average size of the beds vary from 8 feet in the longest to 5½ feet in the shortest.

A nearby rock has a bold relief sculpture of a Thirthankara which can be stylistically dated to 9th century A.D.

Varicciyur

About 23 kms. east of Madurai is Vilattur to whose east is Varicciyur. Near this village is a hill

consisting of three big rocks. The eastern most rock is Udayagiri and it contains a huge spacious cavern formed by the projection of the two sides of the rock. A number of beds have been cut into it, but are highly mutilated. An overhanging boulder at a height of thirty feet from the cavern is engraved with two Brahmi inscriptions.[10] The inscriptions are very much obliterated, however, they appear to mention the cutting of stone beds in the cavern.

Karungalakkudi

Lying about 13 kms to the north of Melur, Karungalakkudi boasts of natural caverns on the hillock. One of the caverns is formed by a boulder resting on and overhanging another. While the cavern containing the Brahmi inscriptions measures 33 ft. square with openings on both the southern and northern sides; the other caverns have mutilated beds cut into the rocky floor. Higher up the hill are three more natural caverns with rows of beds cut into the floor.

The biggest cavern containing a short Brahmi inscription datable to 2nd - 1st centuries B.C. was the monastery presided over by a Muni Ariti who was a native of Elaiyur.[11] The occurrence of a series of stone beds at Karungalakkudi would reveal that large number of monks inhabited the caverns. Since the same place continued to enjoy religious importance in later times, the great Archarya Ajjanandi caused to be made an image of a Tirthankara on a boulder in 9th century A.D.

Vikkiramangalam

This is a village near Solavandan. About 2 kms. away is the Nagamalai range of hills wherein is a natural cavern facing south. The height of this cavern

is not much except at its entrance. The floor is rugged and sloping inwards. Narrow stone beds have been cut into the rock on the floor with low depression in two rows of four and eight respectively close to the uneven rocky walls on either side. In some cases, a few beds have been partitioned from each other by their ridges running the whole length of the beds. No pillow lofts are present, but on the pillow side are three Brahmi inscriptions. They contain names of persons such as Antaipikan, Kuviran and Cenkuviran who in all probability were instrumental in carving out the stone beds in the cavern.[12] Of the three, Kuviran was a native of the village Petalai which remains unidentified. Cenkuviran appears to be a member of the family of Kuviran. The stone beds found at Vikkiramangalam are locally known as Undankal, the exact meaning of which cannot be ascertained at the present state of our knowledge.

Mettupatti (Siddharamalai)

About a kilometer north of Mettupatti which is about 9 kms. south of Nilakottai is a hill commonly called Siddharamalai. On the southern slope of the hill about half way down is a huge cavern measuring 29' in length and 6' 8" in height and has two rows of five beds, cut on the sloping rock each with a pillow loft. Brahmi inscriptions datable to the 2nd - 1st centuries B.C. are engraved at the head side of the beds. Most of these label inscriptions refer to personal names such as Antai Ariti, Antai Iravatan, Antai Visuvan, Antai Sentan, Kavira Antai etc.[13] As these names are prefixed with the epithet 'Antai' which means 'Holy Father', they may also be taken to mean the names of resident monks of the monastery at Mettupatti. In one of the records, it is stated that the stone bed was the gift of the people of a place called Tidiyil (likely a modern hamlet near Dindigul).

Marukaltalai

Situated about 15 kms. from Palayamkottai, Marukaltalai possesses a natural cavern on a low hill, locally referred to as Puviludaiyarmalai. This small cavern is formed by two huge boulders one overhanging the other and about 4' or 5' below the top. The lower boulder contains seven beds at convenient places. At the right side of these is a Brahmi inscription. The cavern is 52' in length north to south and 8' deep. A drip ledge is cut on the overhanging rock so as to drain off rain water. The rock cut beds here were caused to be cut by Kasipan, a member of the Velir clan.[14] These beds, being rock-cut, are referred to as Kalkanchanam in the inscription.

Sittanavasal:

It is the most celebrated Jaina center in Pudukottai District and is situated about 16 kms. from Pudukottai. On the hill near the village at an inaccessible height is a large natural cavern formed of a cleft which divides the over hanging top portion from the rocky floor below. This natural cavern situated on the eastern face of the hill is locally known as Eladipattam. Inside the cave are 17 beds some of which are damaged and all with pillow lofts. Round the top and left side of the largest bed is a deeply engraved Tamil Brahmi inscription. Some of the other beds bear late inscription in the Tamil characters of circa 8th century A.D. A study *in situ* has shown that the centrally located and exceptionally well made Tamil inscription was fashioned much earlier and remained the only one in the cave for centuries until the latter ones were added in the early medieval period. According to the earliest inscription, the stone bed was specially made and gifted to a Jaina Kavuti who was

born in Kumulur in Erumimatu (Mysore region)[15] and the inscription is the earliest epigraphic evidence for contacts between Jaina communities in Karnataka and Tamilnadu.

Sittanavasal continued to flourish as a stronghold of Jaina sect from the 7th to the 9th Century A.D. A rock cut temple dedicated to three Thirthankaras had been hewn out in the northern periphery of the same hillock. This rock cut temple comprises of an inner shrine and ardha mandapa in front.

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2

JAINA TEMPLES

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Jainism had taken deep roots in the Tamil country as early as the 3rd century B.C. Recluses of the Jaina order inhabiting natural caves and pious lay followers providing support to them are borne out by contemporary scriptal records in brahmi characters. Jainism continued to gain currency in the subsequent centuries also. The kings of the Sangam age were liberal in their religious outlook and hence all religious creeds coexisted amicably and harmoniously. The subversion of their political power by the Kalabhras had also not affected the growth of Jaina religion as the Kalabhras lent support to heretical sects. Jainism, thus, emerged into a vital religious force in Tamil Nadu till about the 6th century A.D. But the Bhakti movement spear-headed by the Saiva Nayanmars and Vaishnava Alvars in the 7th century A.D., coupled with the brahmanical temple-building activities of the Pallavas and early Pandya kings led to the decline of Jainism as well as Buddhism. However, Jainism soon recovered from adversities and regained the support of the ruling class and public.

The Cholas who attained political sovereignty in the 9th century also patronised Jainism, although they were ardent followers of Saivism. Epigraphical documents of the Chola kings bear testimony to the ascendency of Jainism and proliferation of its temples till about the 13th century A.D. Although there was a setback once again to Jaina religion in the 15th century, it resuscitated with vigour consequent to the establishment of the Jinakanchi matha at Chittamur. It may be said in this context that independent structural temples dedicated to Tirthankaras were built in different parts of Tamilnadu from about the 6th century down to modern period either with the support of the ruling dynasties or by the Jaina community itself. Architecturally, these Jaina temples do not differ from their brahmanical counterparts except for the sculptural representations that varied according to their affiliation. Brief notices of the historically important Jaina temples in Tamilnau are given hereunder.

Trailokyanatha Temple - Tirupparuttikunram

Kanchipuram, the capital of the Pallavas, became a stronghold of Jainism in the medieval period and continued to be so for several centuries. A colony of the Jaina adherents came into existence at the place known as Jinakanchi alias Tirupparuttikunram on the southern bank of river Vegavati and about four kilometers south-west of the present town Kanchipuram.

There are two temples at Tirupparuttikunram, one dedicated to Vardhamana Mahavira (Trailokyanatha), the twentyfourth Tirthankara and the other to Chandraprabha, the eighth Tirthankara. Both the temples date back to the Pallava period, but now they do not exhibit the Pallava style of architecture.

Among the two, the former temple was in existence as early as the middle of the 6th century A.D. and the Pallava king Simhavarman (556 A.D) is said to have granted the village Amanserkai and some lands in Tamar to the reputed monk Vajranandi for conducting worship to the Jina at Vardhamaneesvara tirtha.[1] The Vardhamana temple was considerably enlarged with additional shrines for Dharmadevi and Pushpadanta and a separate group of shrines for Padmaprabha, Vasupujya and Parsvanatha in the 12th century.

The Sangeetha mandapa of the temple complex was built in 1387 by Irugappa, the famous general of the Vijayanagara king Bukka II[2], probably to hold musical concerts and religious discourses. A prakara wall with the gopura on its eastern side was added by a chieftain Alagiya Pallavan in the 13th century A.D. The Sangeetha mandapa on its ceiling contained two layers of paintings executed during the Vijayanagara and Nayaka rule. The earlier layer has disappeared with the passage of time, while the second layer, depicting incidents connected with the life of Rishabhanatha, Neminatha, Mahavira and Ambika Yakshi, is in a bad state of preservation.

At Jinakanchi, a succession of reputed monks presided over the monastic establishment. But it is not possible to trace the history of the matha as well as the names of the presiding monks. However, epigraphical records mention names such as Vajranandi, Pushpasena, Anantavirya, Vamanacharya Chandrakirti and Mallisena[3] who might have adorned the Pontificate at different periods of time.

Chandraprabha temple

The Chandraprabha temple at Tirupparutti-kunram is of modest proportion and is said to have

been built during the time of Rajasimha Pallava. (8th cent.) It has a shrine and a mandapa infront. The shrine was closed at a later period for reasons not known to us, but the first storey was converted into a shrine accommodating a stucco figure of Chandraprabha. Subsequent renovations and repair works have altered the original style of its architecture and now it appears like a modern structure. However, the rampant yalis at the cardinals of the shrine are reminiscent of the Rajasimha style of architecture. The temple received some benefactions during the reign of Rajendra chola I (1014-1044), but their details are not discernible as the inscriptions containing the informations are completely defaced.[4]

Chittamur Temples

Chittamur, the headquarters of the Digambara sect in Tamilnadu, has two Jaina monuments known as Malainatha temple and Parsvanatha temple. Of the two, the former enshrines an oblong rock-cut panel containing bold relief sculptures of Gommatesvara, Parsvanatha, Adinatha, Mahavira and Ambika Yakshi. It came into existence during the reign of Aditya chola. At that time, it had a small shrine with a front mandapa, but later on, the temple was enlarged with additional mandapas and an enclosure wall. In the year 888 A.D. an endownment was made for lighting a perpetual lamp in this temple.[5] Although the Malainatha temple has lost its original style of architecture consequent to extensive renovations in later times, the magnificient sculptural carvings inside the shrine bear testimony to its early Chola origin.

The Parsvanatha temple was built a little away from the Malainatha temple in the 12th century A.D., when Chittamur became an important centre of the

Jainas. How it looked like in the 12th century can not be ascertained now as the entire structure had undergone complete change over the years. In the year 1136 A.D., King Vikrama chola made a sarvamanya gift of land in about twenty-five villages to the temple.[6] During the reign of Kulottunga II (1148 A.D.), the entire village Chittamur was donated as dirgamanya to the temple.[7] This temple was rebuilt and enlarged in the 19th century with additional shrines and mandapas and thereby deprived of its original style. However, the remaining lithic records throw significant light on the patronage extended by the members of the Chola family to this temple.

Tirunarungondai - Parsvanatha & Chandranatha temples

Tirunarungondai, 16 kms. north-east of Ulundurpet, is yet another sacred centre of the Jainas, having two temples dedicated to Parsvanatha and Chandraprabha atop the hillock. The mandapa type of Parsvanatha temple, popularly known as Appandainatha temple, was built in the 9th century enshrining a low relief of the Tirthankara carved on the western face of a huge boulder. The figure of Parsva is flanked by two thinkly carved Chamradaris. The structural addition together with the 9th century bas-relief of Parsvanatha came to be known as Melaippalli or western temple.[8]

Simultaneously, the Chandraprabha temple with a shrine and a front mandapa, was built by one Vijayanallulan and it was named Kilaippalli or the eastern temple.[9] It was provided with a stone-paved circumambulatory passage and a pillared cloister during the later Chola period.

Both of these temples received benefaction from the ruling community as well as the Jaina followers. Inscriptions found on the temples are replete with various kinds of donation made for the conduct of worship in them. Officials of the Chola King Rajaraja I endowed lands to the temples.[10] King Kulottunga II personally took interest in these temples and endowed the whole village Sirusattanallur for offerings and worship.[11] It deserves special mention that majority of the endowments made to the temples was by the Malayaman, Sediraya and Kadava vassals of the Cholas. Thus, receiving due royal support from the members of the Chola family and their feudal lords, the Appandainatha temple grew into a huge temple complex with additional shrines, mandapas and a prakara having the gopura on the eastern side in later times.

Perumandur - Adinatha temple

Perumandur near Tindivanam has a 9th century temple dedicated to Adinatha and a 11th century temple to Chandraprabha not far away from the former. The Adinatha temple was known as Ravikula Sundaraperumpalli, probably named after a Chola King. Even though the superstructure had undergone renovations and repairs several times, its basal portion retains originality. In the 9th century, the temple consisted of a shrine and an ardhamandapa. Subsequently, a mahamandapa, an Yakshi shrine and an enclosure wall were added in the 12th century. A.D. In the year 1192 A.D., Rajarajasambhuvaraya Chieftain constructed the Yakshi shrine, consecrated therein the image of Ambika and granted some lands for the expenses connected with the worship of the goddess. As the income accrued from the lands was not sufficient

to meet the expenses, the very next year the Sambhuvaraya chief made an additional grant of 2000 kuli land infavour of the Yakshi.[12]

The Chandraprabha temple located to the north of the Adinatha temple seems to have come into existence in the 11th century A.D. At that time, it was a brick-built temple with a shrine preceded by an antarala and ardhamandapa. Subsequently, it was enlarged with a mahamandapa, mukhamandapa and gopura, and these components were constructed with granite blocks. The three storeys of the vimana contain square and rectangular shrine models interspersed by stucco figures of Tirthankara and their attendants. As the temple in its original form is a brick structure, it is devoid of epigraphical documents mentioning the benefactions made infavour of it. The 11th century principal image of Chandranatha in the shrine was replaced by a huge stucco figure of the same Tirthankara, probably in the 16th century, when the temple witnessed large scale renovation. Recently also the temple has been extensively renovated by the local people and thereby the earlier architectural features are lost.

Tirumalai - Kundavai Jinalaya

Tirumalai is a small village about 12 kms. north-west of Polur in Tiruvannamalai district. It attained Jaina importance in the 9th century A.D., when the natural caves on the hillock came to be occupied by recluses. Subsequently, structural temples were built at the foot of the hillock, accommodating the lower cave. The temple on the rear side is known as Kundavai Jinalaya, believed to have been built by Kundavai, the elder sister of Rajaraja chola I. At the time of its construction in the 10th century, it had only

a shrine and an ardhamandapa. Later in the 13th or 14th century, a mahamandapa was added infront. This addition seems to have been effected after undertaking restoration work in the temple. The principal image of Neminatha, by then partly damaged, was replaced with a new sculpture leaving the original in the ardhamandapa.

A colossal image of Neminatha, popularly known as Sikhamaninatha, measuring 16' in height, was carved on the vertical face of a huge rock at the middle of the hillock in the 12th century A.D. This imposing image is, no doubt, one of the masterpieces of the later Chola art. The Tirumalai temple complex attracted people from far-flung areas and received munificent grants from the royal families and the common man. Particularly, the Sambhuvarayas and Atiyaman of Tagadur made valuable contributions to the temple. Still later, several additions in the form of subshrines and mandapas, besides a temple dedicated to Mahavira, came into being within the Kundavai Jinalaya complex.

Temples of modest proportion came into existence at places like Puduppedu, Salukki, Vidur, Kovilangulam etc. in the 10th & 11th centuries. Most of these temples could not withstand the onslaught of time and they have disappeared leaving behind a few images or at times, some architectural members of the structure. Lithic documents recovered from such ruined sites reveal the glorious past of these Jaina establishments.

Ponnur - Kanagamalai Alvar temple

Ponnur is a reputd Jaina centre, about 10 kms. from Vandavasi, having a 12th century temple of Adinatha erected on a low mount called Kanagagiri. The original structure with its shrine, antarala and

ardhamandapa was enlarged with a mahamandapa, yakshi shrine and an enclosure wall in later times. The shrine retains the earlier image of Adinatha seated in dhyana posture. Its button-shaped curly hair, receding forehead, half-closed eyes, contemplative calmness of the countenance, decorative probhavali etc; portray the exquisite skill of the 12th century master-craftsman. This image was variously called Adisvara, Kanagamalainathar and Kanagamalai Alvar.

It is at Ponnur, the Yakshi Jvalamalini receives special worship. The nearby Nilagiri hill (Ponnur hill) is believed to be the habitat of Jvalamalini who is said to have conferred grace upon Helacharya, a renowned monk of the Dravidasangha. His foot-prints, carved on stone, are specially worshipped not only by the Digambaras of Tamilnadu but also of others states. In the year 1733 A.D., an agreement was made, by which the Jainas of Ponnur should take the processional images of Parsvanatha and Jvalamalini from the Adinatha temple to Nilagiriparvata at the time of the weekly worship of Helacharya.[13] This practice was given up at a later period.

Poondi - Ponninatha Temple

The Adinatha temple at Poondi near Arani town was built in the 13th century by a Sambhuvaraya chieftain. It was also known as Viravira Jinalaya and Ponninatha temple. It consists of a shrine, ardhamandapa and mahamandapa, all enclosed by a prakara wall. The sanctum contains the original image of Adinatha consecrated by the Sambhuvaraya chieftain, while the front mandapa has sculptures representing Parsvanatha and Ambika Yakshi of the 16th century A.D.

The 15th and 16th centuries witnessed a phenomenal growth of Jaina temples in the northern

part of Tamilnadu, due to the concentration of the Jaina population there. Besides, the establishment of the Jinakanchi matha at Chittamur by Virasenacharya also gave a fillip to construction of temples in places like Vangaram, Vilukkam, Venkunram, Elankadu, Kunnattur, Mudalur, Kil-idaiyalam, Melmalayanur, Viranamur etc. These temples, even though renovated in recent years, bear architectural features of the 15th and 16th centuries. Jaina families living in these villages take care of the temples. Provision for the conduct of daily pujas and annual festivals are being made by these Jaina adherents.

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3

JAINA SCULPTURAL ART

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Jaina contribution to art and architecture has created a special niche for them in the long history over a period of two thousand years in the southern part of peninsular India. The rich art heritage of the Digambara Jainas in Tamilnadu is manifested in their rock-cut monuments and structural sanctuaries still under worship. They contain splendid iconic forms of the Tirthankaras and their attendant deities. These sculptural depictions throw a flood of light on the chequered history of Jaina religion, illustrate the excellent artistic achievements of the past and reflect the lofty ideals and subtle philosophy of the Tirthankaras. Moreover, the changes brought about in the sphere of religion, mode of worship, rituals etc., can also be understood from these specimens of art.

Although the architectural monuments of the Jainas form the subject of research for many scholars, the potentiality of their sculptural wealth has not been taken up for intensive study. Earlier published works of Jaina art in Tamilnadu contain brief descriptions of only the outstanding specimens, although their

instances are too many. Hence, a systematic survey and a multi-dimensional approach to the study of the Digambara sculptures in Tamilnadu would be a desideratum.

ABSENCE OF SCULPTURES IN EARLY CAVES:

The earliest extant religious monuments of Tamilnadu are the natural caves which one served as abodes of Jaina mendicants. More than one hundred such abodes of the wind-clad ascetics have been brought to light sofar and they are found in Tirunelveli, Ramnad, Madurai, Pudukkottai, Trichy, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai and Erode districts.

These caves were made suitable for habitation of monks by cutting stone beds inside them. Sometimes, on the over-hanging boulder of the caves, a drip-ledge was cut to prevent rainwater flowing into the cave shelters. Epigraphical records in Brahmi characters of the 3rd century B.C. to 4th century A.D., mentioning the names of resident monks or of the donors of stone beds, are incised on many of them.[1] Curiously enough, these early abodes of the Jaina monks are devoid of any sculptural embellishment.

Jainism in its early phase was very simple and puritanic and monks of the Jaina order paid little importance to image worship. Besides, the traditional aversion of the early Tamils towards the use of granite or any hard stone for making religious images also stood a stumbling block to the progress of sculptural art[2]. However, this trend did not continue for long and, in course of time, changes had been accepted in all religious systems, as a result of which iconism and ritualistic worship formed an integral part of the religious life of people. Various factors contributed to

such changes in the sphere of religion in medieval times.

BHAKTI MOVEMENT AND ITS IMPACT:

In the religious history of Tamilnadu, the 7th century A.D. marks the rapid growth of brahmanical religion on the one side and the decline of Bauddha and Jaina sects on the other. The bhakti movement spear-headed by the Nayanmars and Alvars coupled with the brahmanical temple-building activities of the Pallavas and early Pandyas gave a fillip to the growth of Saivism and Vaishnavism. In their attempts at popularizing brahmanical religion, the bhakti saints undertook extensive pilgrimage to almost all the temples, sang in praise of the principal deities with soul-stirring hymns, performed miracles, roused the religious feelings of the common man and admitted all sections of society into their fold. At the same time, they also condemned vehemently the customs and practices of the Jainas as well as Buddhists.

The Saiva and Vaishnava temples of the Pallavas and Pandyas become pivotal centers containing elegant sculptural forms of gods and goddesses. Ritualistic worship of these deities in temples formed an integral part of brahmanical religion. All these temple oriented activities fulfilled the aspiration of the common man and attracted more people into the fold of brahmanism. Besides, the numerous land grants and other donations made to these temples provided economic strength and man-power. Thus, the concerted efforts of bhakti-saints and royal support to Brahmanism affected the growth of Jainism in the 7th century A.D. However, soon it recovered from adversities and came to possess a fresh lease of life by adjusting itself to the circumstances and accommodating some elements from brahmanism[3].

In this process of assimilation, Jainism admitted ritualistic and anthropomorphic worship of Tirthankaras and their attendant deities. Sometimes, prominence was given to the worship of yakshis like Ambika and Padmavati. The early Jaina caves which lost their importance in the wake of bhakti movement began to throb with religious activities in the 8th - 9th centuries and came to possess excellent images of Tirthankaras and yakshis, to which regular ritualistic worship had been performed. Lay devotees began to make endowments in the form of land, gold, sheep etc., for the conduct of daily pujas to these icons and for the upkeep of the monastic establishments. The early abodes of Jaina mendicants, in course of time, thus, got metamorphosised into temples.

Simultaneously, building of temples in urban and semi urban centers was on the increase in the Pallava and Pandya domains. Jaina cave temples at Anaimalai, Arittapatti, Aivaramalai, Uttamapalayam, Kuppalanattam, Kalugumalai, Chitaral etc., in the Pandya region and Anantamangalam, Atchipakkam, Tirumalai, Tondur, Tirunatharkunru, Tirunarungondai, Cholapandipuram, Vallimalai, Valutalangunam etc., in Tondaimandalam were embellished with exquisite sculptures of Tirthankaras and at times with yakshis. Structural temples in places like Tirupparuttikunram, Perumandur, Karantai, Agalur and Kilsattamangalam are also best examples bearing testimony to this new development.

ROCK-CUT SCULPTURES:

In Tondaimandalam, Jaina caves at Karuppankunru, Panchapandavamalai and Tirakkol attained importance in the 8th century A.D. At Karuppankunru, 24 Kms, north-east of Madurantakam,

relief sculptures of Adinatha and Mahavira are carved on a boulder leading to the cave atop the hillock. A little away from these images, a beautiful sculpture of Parsvanatha flanked by Dharanendra and Padmavati yakshi was commissioned within a shrine-model at the instance of Vasudeva Siddhanta Bhattaraka in the 8th century A.D.[4]

An excellent portrayal of Ambika yakshi and an image of Naganandiacharya are accommodated in the cave at Panchapandavamalai near Arcot town. The goddess is shown seated in ardhautkutikasana with her left arm holding a lily flower and the right resting on the seat. Miniature figures of her sons and husband are also seen in the panel. Naganandi, a monk who probablly popularized the worship of Ambika, stands in kayotsarga a little away from the yakshi. All these images were caused to be made by one Naranan of Pugalalaimangalam in 781 A.D.[5]

Tirakkol near Vandavasi has a huge boulder containing beautifully carved images of Adinatha, Chandranatha, Parsvanatha and Mahavira on its four sides. Except Parsvanatha, others are shown seated in dhyana posture. Parsvanatha, occupying the western side, stands in kayotsarga pose, canopied by a five-hooded serpent above his head. Kamata kneels down in supplication on the right side, while Padmavati holds a long-handled umbrella above the head of Parsva, from the left side. All these bold reliefs exhibit the 9th century style of art.

Ananthamangalam, 14 kms north-west of Tindivanam, has two groups of sculptures carved on the facade of a cave and an adjacent boulder. The first group represents Ambika majestically standing along with a row of three Tirthankaras. The next group has Parsvadeva flanked by Padmavati and Kamata in

anjali pose. The cave together with these sculptures was known as Jinagiripalli.[6]

An excellent portrayal of Parsvanatha in the 9th century Chola style of art could be seen on the western face of a huge boulder atop the hillock at Atchippakkam, about 20 Kms. north-east of Tindivanam. The Tirthankara stands in an erect posture with a five hooded serpent canopy above his head. Padmavati holds a long - handled umbrella extending beyond the serpent hood. At the right corner of the panel, Kamata is shown wielding a huge boulder in his four arms with the intension of hurling it on Parsva. As his attempts to disturb the penance of Parsvanatha caused no adverse effect, he bows down before the Jina. Strangely enough, a four-armed celestial on a chariot is sculpted at the left hand corner as if witnessing the whole episode.

Chittamur, situated between Tindivanam and Ginjee, the headquarters of the Digambara sect, is noted for its Malainatha and Parsvanatha temples. The former temple grew around a huge boulder containing an oblong panel with excellent images of Bahubali, Parsvanatha, Adinatha, Mahavira and Ambika yakshi. Among them, the sculpture of Ambika is spectacular and unparalleled in the rock-art of Tamilnadu. Like a creeper entwining a tree, she stands elegantly in tribhanga pose with her right leg firmly placed on the back of the crouching lion and the left, bent at the knee, rests on the areca tree behind. Her right arm possesses a lily flower whereas the left entwines the areca tree. Her smiling countenance, attenuated waist, globular shaped abdomen, suppleness of the limbs, etc., are illustrative of the immaculate workmanship of a divine artist. These sculptures were commissioned during the reign of Aditya Chola I (871-901 A.D.)[7]

Tirunatharkunru, adjacent to Ginjee town, contains a huge boulder with an interesting series of twenty-four Tirthankaras, arranged in two rows and accommodated within an oblong framework. The Tirthankaras are sculpted alike in seated posture, surmounted by triple umbrellas, but without other accessory motifs. However, each image is flanked by a pair of flywhisks placed cross-wise, a feature not to be seen in other places.

Vallimalai, 32 kms. north-west of Vellore, was a prominent Jaina centre, attracting monks and lay devotees from Karnataka since the 9th century A.D. The hillock at this place contains sculptures of Jaina deities at different levels. A shallow cavern on the north-eastern side has three groups of sculptures exhibiting the Western Ganga style of art. The first group represents bold reliefs of Adinatha and Mahavira with out the usual accessory motifs like prabhavali, trichatra and creeper design. However, a pair of miniature chauri-bearers could be seen at their shoulder level. Besides, Sarvahna yaksha and Ambika yakshi flank them at the foot-level. A little away from this composition is a bold relief of Padmavati yakshi, seated in sukhasana pose with four arms, carrying attributes such as ankusa, pasa, lotus and fruit. A thinly carved single serpent hood forms the canopy above her crown. Its hefty body, heavy bosom, sturdy limbs and thick folds of abdominal muscles are reminiscent of Western Ganga style. The third group is a row of five monks and a Tirthankara with Kannada label inscriptions mentioning their names incised below the pedestals.[8]

The southern side of the hillock has a series of sculptures depicting Parsvanatha, Chandrantha, Ambika, Mahavira etc. Among them, the finest is the

life-size image of Mahavira, seated majestically in meditative pose and surmounted by a triple umbrella set within a conically cut niche. Its massive body with a melting contour, snail-curls of hair, smiling countenance, half-closed contemplative eyes etc., are illustrative of the immaculate work-manship of a 9th century master craftsman.

The Andimalai hillock at Cholapandipuram has two huge boulders converging at the top, and thereby appears like a cavern. The inner side of the boulders contains bold reliefs of a seated Tirthankara, Parsvanatha and Bahubali facing each other. The rear side of the cavern has a loose sculpture of Ambika yakshi, now worshipped as Kaliamman by the local Hindus. These 10th century sculptures were commissioned by one Velikongariya - Puttadigal and the local Chedi Chieftain Siddhavadavan donated the village Panaipadi for conducting worship to these deities.[9]

On the northern slope of the Tirumalai hillock near Polur is a group of four excellent depictions of Ambika, Bahubali, Adinatha and Parsvanatha exhibiting the 10th century style. Among them, the icons of Ambika and Bahubali are superb. The Yakshi stands majestically by the side of an areca tree with her sons and a lady attendant carrying a vessel on either side. Above the children is the carving of her husband Somasarman wondering the charming figure of the golden yakshi.

Bahubali pursues severe austerities standing in a rigid position and attended by his sisters on either side. His massive body, broad shoulders and stout legs portraying masculine vigour are in contrast to the feminine charm exhibited by the slender form,

descending breasts, wavy abdominal muscles and attenuated hip of his sisters.

The Pandya region has more number of Jaina caverns than the Pallava territory. Apart from the early cave shelters around Madurai, several new ones as at Chitaral, Eruvadi and Kalugumalai emerged as important centers of sculptural art. At Chitaral in Kanyakumari district', a cavern on its outer side contains two rows of figures, the upper consists of twelve miniature forms of Tirthankaras, while the lower one has four bold reliefs of Adinatha, Mahavira, Parsvanatha and Ambika interspersed by miniature Tirthankaras. These images were caused to be made at the instance of monks such as Ajjanandi, Uttanandi and Viranandi in the 9th century A.D.[10] The interior of the cave was modified into niches accommodating fine sculptures of Ambika, Mahavira and Parsvanatha.

Eruvadi, 5 kms.to the north-west of Valliyoor in Tirunelveli district, has an intersting sculptured group of Adinatha and Mahavira on the eastern face of a hillock known as Irattaiporrai (twin hillock). The two Tirthankaras are shown seated in ardhaparyankasana and each crowned by a triple umbrella. The physique of the latter is stouter than the former. These two images, commissioned by the renowned monk Ajjanandi in the 9th century A.D., were taken care of by the members of the local assembly who agreed to make necessary arrangement for the conduct of their worship.[11] It may be added in this context that depicting the first and last Tirthankara in a single composition became an art convention symbolizing the Chaturvimsatimurtis in sculptural art from the 9th century A.D.

Kalugumalai in Tuticorin district was the most prolific Jaina centre in the 9th and 10th centuries. The

large space above the main cave was transformed into an array of more than one hundred and fifty images of Tirthankaras and attendant deities, varying in size and arranged in three tiers. The lower two rows are interspersed at intervals by big size images of Adinatha, Neminantha, Mahavira, Parsvanatha, Padmavati and Ambika, commissioned in separate niches. Among them, the figures of Parsva, Padmavati and Ambika deserve special mention.

Parsvanatha is magnificently shown in kayotsarga pose, flanked by kneeling Kamata and casually standing Padmavati yakshi. What is unique in this composition is that Dharanendra, instead of showing him in the form of a five-hooded serpent, is seen in therio-anthropomorphic form sheltering the head of Parsva and unusually holding two fly-whisks in his arms.

The sculpture of Padmavati is depicted in sukhasana pose with four arms, carrying a pasa, ankusa, fruit and pustaka. Her tall crown is adorned with a five-hooded serpent canopy, arranged beautifully in a conical fashion. Ambika yakshi stands elegantly having a tall and slender body. She is accompanied by one of her sons, lady attendant and the lion mount. The presence of her husband in this composition is noteworthy in that his body is shown trembling at the very sight of the yakshi. The sculpture is carved in conformity with the tradition that when Ambika assumed the golden yakshi form, her husband could not withstand the glow of her body and consequently fell down unconsciously and breathed his last to be reborn as her lion vehicle.

An unfinished rock-cut temple of the 7th century A.D. could be seen on the slopes of Chokkampatti hillock near Kadayanallur in Tirunelveli district. The

empty shrine is guarded by a pair of dvarapalakas carved more or less in an erect position. Niches on the other sides have life-size, but partially finished images of Dharanendra yaksha and Padmavati yakshi. He is depicted like a royal person wearing a crown adorned with a triple serpent hood. His right arm is raised in anjali, while the left rests on a mace. The portion below the hip remains unfinished. Although the image resembles like a dvarapalaka, the presence of a three hooded snake resolves its identity with Dharanandra. The figure of Padmavati, leaning towards the front, stands gracefully with heavy bosom, raises her right arm in anjali and keeps the left in lolahasta. Its benign countenance, hefty body, bulbous breasts, thick folds of abdominal muscles etc. add charm to the image. Unfortunately, its lower portion remains incomplete. The stoppage of carving works in this temple, according to some scholars, seems to have been a sequel to the sectarian animosity between the brahmanical creeds and the Jainas in the 7th century A.D.[12]

The famous rock-cut temple at Sittannavasal, 16 kms. from Pudukkottai, contains in its shrine a row of three seated figures of Tirthankaras representing Adinatha, Neminatha and Mahavira. Except for the trichatra above their heads, no other decorative elements could be seen around them. When the front mandapa was renovated in the 9th century A.D., its lateral walls were added with bold reliefs of Parsvanatha and an acharya facing each other. Parsvanatha performs austerities in ardhaparyankasana with a five hooded serpent canopy adorning his head arranged in a conical fashion. The other image of the acharya, seated in yogic posture and crowned by a single umbrella above the head, seems to be the same

as Ilangautaman acharya of Madurai who undertook the renovation work of the rock-cut temple in the 9th century A.D.[13]

The ascetic abodes at Anaimalai, Aivarmalai, Algarmalai, Arittapatti, Kilakuyilkudi, Muttuppatti etc., around Madurai pulsated with religious activities in the 9th century A.D. As a result, they began to wear a new look with exquisite sculptures of Tirthankaras and, at times, yakshis. Uttamapalayam cave also got metamorphosised into a veritable gallery of sculptures with recurrent versions of Parsvanatha and others.

Anaimalai, 14 Kms. from Madurai, attained the peak of its glory in the 9th century A.D., when the earlier ascetic abode was embellished with a number of lovely Jaina sculptures. At that time, a series of bold reliefs representing Tirthankaras and Ambika were carved inside the cave in a row. Among them, the notable are depictions of Parsvanatha and Neminatha. Parsva is seen standing in a rigid poise with the therio-anthropomorphic form of Dharanendra above his head as at Kalugumalai. The image of Neminatha portrayed in ardhaparyankasana and surmounted by a triple umbrella, is set within a niche resembling the whorl of a conch. Ambika with her sons, lady attendant and her husband Somasarman are sculpted to left side of Neminatha. Lithic records in the cave reveal that all these images were caused to be made at the instance of monk Ajjanandi and lay devotees like Enadinadi, Saradan Araiyan and Evviyam Puthi and CheliyaPandi.[14] The accountants of Porkodu village and some revenue officials of Venbaikudi agreed to protect these images.[15]

Kilakuyilkudi near Nagamalai contains two natural caves, one at the lower level and another at a higher level of a hillock. The lower cave, known as

Chettipodavu, on its frontage accommodates a massive figure of Mahavira having broad shoulders, smiling countenance, flaming aureola around the head and flanked by chamradaris and vidhyadaras further above. The bold conception of its physique and horizontality of its shoulders are true reflections of Mahavira's great strength. The interior of the cave is sculpted with low reliefs of three seated Tirthankaras flanked by two forms of Ambika, one seated and the other in a fighting pose.

The latter is a vivid portrayal of the goddess riding a lion, holding a bow and arrow in her arms and fighting with an evil-person riding on an elephant. This is a unique specimen of Ambika yakshi in fighting attitude, probably carved in conformity with some local tradition.

The upper cave known as Pechchipallam also contains a number of Jaina sculptures, mostly representing Parsvanatha. Although all his images are depicted similarly in kayotsarga pose, some difference could be seen in the mode of representing the snakehood and the accompanying figures of Kamata and Padmavati.

The 9th century specimens of Adinatha and Mahavira carved side by side above the cave at Muththupatti near Kilakuyilkudi are remarkable for their elegance and refinement of art. The first image of Adinatha accommodated in a curvilinear niche was commissioned by monk Kanagavira Periyadigal, while that of Mahavira within a rectangular niche was caused to be made by Maganandi acharya.[16]

Uttamapalayam, about one hundred kilometers south-west of Madurai, is yet another 9th century prolific Jaina centre with a natural cave and a group of bold relief sculptures of Tirthankaras carved on the

face of a huge boulder known as 'karuppannasamy' rock. The western end of the rock has two beautiful images of Adinatha and Mahavira, while the remaining part of the rock is studded with eight versions of Parsvanatha sheltered by a snake hood. Interestingly, the eighth specimen is provided with a seven hooded serpent canopy, convering like an aureola around the head of Parsva. These images were consecrated by great asceties like Ajjanandi and Arishtanemi, besides some lay followers whose names are lost.[17]

SCULPTURES IN STRUCTURAL TEMPLES:

Structrual temples, built in different parts of Tamilnadu since medieval times, have either disappeared completely with the passage of time or the surviving ones have lost their original architectural style consequent to extensive repairs and renovations. However, historically important temples in places like Tirupparuttikunram,Tirunarungondai, Tirumalai, Chittamur, Karantai, Perumandur, Ponnur, Pundi etc., have some sculptures belonging to the Pallava, Chola, Pandya and Vijayanagara schools of art. Some specimens, which escaped the wrath of human vandalism, are preserved in modern temples as at Venkunram, Thiyagadurgam, Chettippatti and Puduppedu. Besides, the Government Museums have also acquired quite a good number of stray images from various places. Select examples representing the different schools of art are described hereunder.

An archaic image of a Tirthankara (Mahavira) from Valuvur is now kept in the Jaina temple at Venkunram near Vandavasi. It is a low relief shown seated in dhyana posture, having a slender body, flexible arms, loosely arranged legs and discular trichatra above the head. Fly-whisk bearers and

creeper designs are conspicuous by their absence in this 7th century specimen.

Two bas-reliefs, representing Mahavira and Ambika yakshi are now placed inside a modified cave temple at Thiyagadurgam in Vilupuram district. The Tirthankara is shown seated on a low pedestal with the arms loosely held a little above his folded legs. The head surmounted by an arch with flames, the triple umbrella resembling discs placed one over the other in diminishing tiers and the thinly carved chamradaris are beautifully accommodated within a conical slab.

Ambika yakshi stands in tribhanga pose, with her right arm holding a bunch of three mangoes (or flower buds) and the left placed on the head of her lady attendant. Miniatures of her two sons are shown at her shoulder level, while the lion vehicle and Somasarman are seen on the right side. An areca tree with a bunch of ripe fruits is carved behind the yakshi. These two relief sculptures exhibit the 8th century style of Pallava art.

Two early Chola sculptures of the 9th century from Mossakudi are preserved in the Pudukkottai museum. The first specimen represents a Tirthankara seated in dhyana pose with his arms loosely held above the crossed legs. The triple umbrella resembles thick discs placed one over the other. Other decorative elements are omitted in this figure. The second one is an exquisite image of Parsvanatha with a well-proportioned body, smiling countenance, snail-curls of hair, and a halo-like converging serpent hood above the head.

Among the sculptural vestiges found in the dilapidated temple at Chettipatti near Pudukkottai, the images of Mahavira, Parsvanatha (head only) and chauri-bearers are noteworthy. Mahavira is seated in

ardhaparyankasana without any decorative design on the background. The head of Parsvanatha is an excellent piece of plastic art illustrating the best traditions of the 10th century Chola style. The curvilinear contour of the serpent canopy, smiling countenance of Parsva, arrangement of the curly hair in small circles, half-closed contemplative eyes etc., add beauty and serenity to this fragmentary specimen. Figures of chauri-bearers, carved upto the middle part, which once adorned the niches of the temple, also belong to the same school of art.

The images of Parsvanatha and Bahubali found in the Karantai termple near Kanchipuram are illlustrative of the 11th century Chola style. True to the appellation, "Tirumerrisai Perumal"18 (west-facing deity), the figure of Parsvanatha with the usual iconographic features, occupies the western niche of the shrine. The idol of Bahubali, absorbed in deep meditation, stands motionlessly, unaccompanied by his sisters on either side. Interestingly, locks of hair are shown falling on his shoulders in this specimen and it is rather a rare feature in the sculptures of Tamilnadu.

Twelfth and thriteenth-century Jaina sculpures are found in the Ponnur, Pundi, Perumandur and Tirumalai temples. These images are generally sturdier than the earlier sculptures and contain more decorative elements on the prabhavali and on the accompanying chamradaris. The damaged figure of Ambika yakshi from Perumandur and the Tirthankara images housed in subsidiary shrines at Tirumalai are the best examples of this period.

Sculptural works of the Vijayanagara style are seen in a number of temples as at Chittamur, Pundi, Vilukkam, Vijayamangalam, Tirûpparuttikuram, Tiruppanamur, Tirumalai etc. These specimens, no

doubt, follow the usual iconic pattern, but lack the aesthetic beauty of the Pallava, Chola and Pandya sculptures. Rigid anatomical features, angular profile of the limbs, minute carvings on the background and elaborate ornamentation of the trichatra are commonly seen in them. As a result, the Vijayanagara and Nayak sculptures are bereft of the serene and sublime qualities of the earlier styles of art.

PROBLEM OF IDENTIFICATION:

In Jaina art, the Tirthankaras except Parsvanatha and Suprasvanatha are represented more or less identical, either seated in ardhaparyankasana or standing in kayotsarga pose. Distinctive personal attributes, as in the case of Hindu deities, have not been provided to the Tirthankaras. However, they are attributed with a congnizance each inorder to facilitate their identity. Moreover, each Tirthankara is attended by a pair of yaksha and yakshi, whose presence at the foot-level of the images also reveals the identity of Tirthankaras. The practice of carving emblems or attendant deities along with Tirthankaras is very common almost through out India. But in Tamilnadu, such a practice had not been followed till about the 18th century A.D., in consequence of which the possibility of identifying earlier images is rather very difficult. Under such circumstances, literary evidence, epigraphical documents, local traditions, art-conventions etc., may provide some clue for identifying some of the Tirthankara images.

For instance, single represntations of a Tirthankara carved on the overhanging boulders of the caves at Panchapandamalai, Valutalangunam and Arittapatti can be safely identified with Adinatha on the basis of epigraphical corroboration. The 8th century

miniature sculpture of a seated Tirthankara at Panchapandavamalai near Arcot town is referred to as "Tiruppaanmalaidevar".[19] ie, lord of the milk- white mountain. In conformity with the puranic tradition of Adinatha attaining nirvana on the snow-clad Kailasa mountain, here, the image is elegantly styled as "Tiruppaanmalaidevar", and thereby its identity is made clear.

The fine protrayal of a Tirthankara adorning the cave at Valutalanguanam, near Tiruvannamalai, was known as "Marutupirasuraidevar".[20] Although this epigraphical name is incongruous, it appears to mean the Deva born to Marudevi, ie, Adinatha. Arittapatti near Madurai has an exquisite specimen, commissioned by the reputed monk Ajjanandi in the 9th century A.D. The clue for its identification lies in the name of the hillock, "Tiruppinaiyanmalai",[21] which means hillock of that Tirthankara who served as a saviour and protected human beings from disintegration when the bhoga-bhumi lost all its charm and wealth. Obviously, Adinatha is indirectly alluded to in this epithet "Tiruppinaiyan". Similar names, occuring in lithic records as well as literary compositions, may also help to reslove the identity of Tirthankaras and thier attendant deities.

It was an art convention to depict the first and last Tirthankaras together, symbolizing the chaturvismsatimurtis. Such specimens are found at Karuppankunru, Eruvadi, Melapparaipatti, Muttuppatti, Uttamapalayam, Vallimalai etc. In all these examples, the image of Mahavira is shown with a stouter and sturdier physique than that of Adinatha, Besides, his shoulders possess a horizontal countour, while that of Adinatha are sloping. Thus, Mahavira's sturdy physique and horizontal countour of the shoulders differentiate

him from Adinatha. The bold conception of body and horizontality of shoulders are true reflections of Virasamy's (Mahavira's) great strength.

Some scholars have tried to identify certain images with that of Mahavira on the basis of the three front-facing lions carved on the pedestal, mistaking them for his emblem.[22] These lion figures are suggestive of the simhasana and not of the lanchana of Mahavira. Infact, these motifs occur on the pedestals of other Tirthankaras also, hence, the presence of lions is not a criterion to identify the sculptures of Mahavira.

Neminatha, the twenty second Tirthankara, is popularly known as Sikhamaninatha in Tamilnadu. Here, the convention of carving his image between the sculptures of Adinatha and Mahavira has been adopted in places like Kalugumalai, Sittannavasal, Uttamapalayam, Kilavalavu, Chettipodavu, Kuppalanattam etc., where they are shown in a group of three Tirthankaras. At Uttamapalayam and Anaimalai, the niche containing his image is fashioned like the whorl of a conch (his emblem), which feature also adds credence to his identification. Sometimes, the presence of Ambika yakshi to his right side is also taken to be an indication of Neminatha's identity, as at Ananthamangalam.[23] But this cannot be strictly considered as a rule for his identification.

DISPOSITION OF TIRTHANKARA IMAGES:

Canonical texts on Hindu sculptures have laid down rules as to which side or direction images of deities should be installed in temples. These rules are strictly adhered to in Saiva and Vaishnava temples even at present. But such a tradition has not been followed in Jaina temples. However, some rock-cut

images of Adinatha are carved east facing, Mahavira south facing and Parsvanatha west facing. Such specimens are met with in places like Kalugumalai, Chettipodavu, Anaimalai, Tirakkol, Vallimalai, Tirunarungondai etc. Whether these sculptures were intensionally commissioned so or merely a coincidence cannot be precisely ascertained at present.

During the medieval times, however, there was a strong belief associating Parsvanatha with the western direction among the Digambaras of Tamilnadu. As its sequel, many of his images came to be consecrated facing the western direction. Being a Jina occupying the western niche, Parsvanatha was popularly known as "Tirumerrisaiyan" or "Tirumerrisai perumal".[24] Lithic records from Karantai and Jaina devotional compositions such as Tirumerrisai Anthathi, Tirumerrisai padikam and Appandainathar Ula[25] eulogise Parsvanatha as a Tirthankara facing the western direction. Although this tradition was in vogue in Tamilnadu, most of the Parsvanatha temples face east and they even do not accommodate his image in the western niche of the shrine. Hence, it cannot be treated as a rule that Parsvanatha should be consecrated facing the western direction only.

IMPACT OF KARNATAKA ART IDIOM:

Karnataka and Tamilnadu had political, cultural, commercial and religious contacts from a very early period. Jainism served as a link between the two regions since the 3rd century B.C. down to modern times. Most of the historians agree in common that Jainism spread to Tamilnadu from Karnataka long before the advent of the Christian era.[26] An early brahmi inscription of the 2nd century B.C. from Sittannavasal records that one Kauti Iten monk of

Eruminadu (Mysore area) took to asceticism at Sittannavasal.[27] Monks of the Mulasangha at Sravanabelgola successively travelled to distant parts of Karnataka as well as Tamilnadu inorder to propagate the gospel of the Jina.[28] The cordial relation between the Jaina adherents of the two regions could be understood by a systematic study of literary works, epigraphical documents, manuscripts, paintings and sculptures in both the regions.

The impact of Karnataka art idiom on that of Tamilnadu is illustrated at its best by the sculptures from places like Kalugumalai, Pechchipallam, Karantai, Pudukottai and Vallimalai. Among the 9th century triple images of Adinatha, Neminatha and Mahavira from Kalugumalai, the first two images contain carvings of a dharmachakra and flaming conch respectively on their pedestals. The presence of these lanchanas is believed to be mainly due to the impact of Western Ganga art idiom in the Pandya country.[29]

Tirumalai has a colossal image of Neminatha, popularly known as Sikhamaninatha, carved on a huge rock. The very idea of sculpting this imposing figure in the 12th century seems to have been inspired by the Bahubali colossus of Sravanabelgola.[30]

The Western Ganga sculptures representing Adinatha and Mahavira at Valliamalai near Vellore are flanked by Sarvahna yaksha and Ambika yakshi. Similarly, the Adinatha bronze figures obtained from Pudukkottai are accompanied by Gomukha and Chakresvari. The presence of the attendant deities along with their respective Tirthankaras in these specimens of the 9th - 10th centuries apparently reveal the impact of Karnataka art idiom in Tamilnadu.[31] The presence of jatas on the shoulders of Adinatha in the Pudukkottai bronzes, and of the Bahubali images from

Tirumalai and Karantài and a mango tree behind the sculptures of Ambika as at Valliamalai, Cholapandipuram and Sempattur is also due to such an extraneous impact. Kannada epigraphical records found in Dharmapuri, Valliamalai, Tirumalai, Pechchipallam etc., bear testimony to the successive Jaina contacts between Tamilnadu and Karnataka during medieval and late medieval times.[32]

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4

JAINA BRONZES

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Origin of Jainism could be traced back to a few centuries before the advent of Christian era in Tamilnadu. Numerous Jaina vestiges in the form of natural caves with stone beds; stone sculptures in relief and round and bronze icons, all depicting Tirthankaras and their attendant deities are found in different parts of the State. It is traditionally accepted[1] that after the death of king Chandragupta and Bhadrabahu, a Jaina spiritual leader, their disciples had moved further south into Tamilnadu around 3rd cent.B.C.and spread Jainism. Although there is no direct evidence to the southward migration of Bhadrabahu's disciples to Tamilnadu, the occurrence of early brahmi inscriptions in Tirunelveli, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Pudukkottai and Viluppuram districts testifies to the introduction of Jainism to the south earlier than the 2nd century B.C.[2] It is further proved by the Sangam works. In this regard the contributions of prince Ilamkadunko, Kadalanvaluti an officer of King Nedunjeliyan, Atiyaman Nedumananji of Tagadur, Kaniman a local chieftain could be cited as the best examples.[3] All these

attest to the royal patronage enjoyed by the Jains between 3rd cent.B.C. and 3rd cent.A.D. Even in the subsequent Pallava and the Chola periods also the Jainism gained patronage, which is corroborated by the occurrence of its material evidences upto 13th cent.A.D. These vestiges, as stated above are in the form of natural caverns, beds, sculptures, bronzes, paintings and inscriptions. This paper is an attempt to survey some of the Jaina bronzes that are available in Tamilnadu.

TIRTHANKARAS

ADINATHA

Stone images of Adinatha alias Rishabhanatha are available right from 9th cent.A.D. However, his bronze images are rather rare in the medieval temples, but found in large number in the late medieval and modern temples. An inscribed bronze image[4] found in the Brooklyn Museum at U.S.A. is said to be the earliest known Rishabhanatha. Dated to 9th cent.A.D. the specimen has a broad chest, rounded shoulders, oval face and slender waist. It is one of the best available specimens from Tamilnadu. The label inscription found on the pedestal has been deciphered as "eruputturudai irucha(bha)", which means Rishabhanatha belonging to the village Eruputtur, which is unidentifiable. In the Pudukottai District Museum, yet another specimen of Adinatha with a torana, containing 23 Tirthankaras, is found. Its body is slender and the head is oval in shape. The importance of the specimen is the depiction of jata falling on the shoulders. At the foot of the Adinatha, yaksha and yakshi are shown on either side. In this connection scholars are of the opnion[5] that portrayal of

Adinatha with jatas and yaksha and yakshi is quite unusual in Tamilnadu, whereas it is common in Karnataka. On this score, presence of a similar specimen dated to 11-12th cent.A.D. under display in the Mysore Museum, could be cited as an example. Another best specimen is that of a seated Adinatha dated to 12-13th cent.A.D., from Polur, now under display in the Madras Museum. He is in ardhaparyanka pose with a prabhavali emitting flames on its periphery. It has a well-proportioned body, round face, broad chest, and rounded limbs etc., which are characteristic features of Chola style. On either side of the Tirthankara, chamradaris are shown.

At Tirunarungondai and Venkunram two similar bronze images dated to 16th cent.A.D. are found. They are standing in kayotsarga pose on a pedestal. The former is believed to have been installed by Gunabhadracharya who revived the Virasangha at Tirunarungondai. In conformity with this, a miniature figure of Gunabhadracharya in anjali is shown on the pedestal of the image. Between 17th and 20th cent.A.D. more bronze images of Adinatha are found in the temples situated in places like Kilidayalam, Uppuvelur, Vilukkam, Vidur, Perumandur, Ponnur, Somasipadi, Tirumalai etc. Unlike the stone images of the Tirthankara, which are depicted in seated pose, these bronzes of Adinatha are always in kayotsarga pose. Majority of these images possess a seated or standing bull on the pedestal. Occasionally, a dharmachakra is also shown. Though bronze images are available more in number in this later phase, the usual charm and beauty noticed in the early bronzes are absent.

PARSVANATHA

An 8th cent.A.D. bronze image found in the Govt.Museum, Chennai is believed to be the earliest

representation of Parsvanatha Tirthankara cast in metal.[6] The specimen is slender and in standing position with a slender body, an oval face, bulging eyes, flat nose, rigid legs etc. A serpent canopy is shown above the head in a peculiar fashion. The body of the snake is shown down like a cord. Unusually, the figure of Parsva is provided with loin cloth to cover nudity, which is not to be found in Digambara images. Apart from this we do not find any metal cast of this Tirthankara until 16th cent.A.D. when a metal image of Parsvanatha was found at Tirunarungondai. This specimen portrays Parsvanatha in kayotsarga pose. His left arm is broken and his original canopy is replaced with a nine-hooded snake in later period. From the 18th cent.A.D. onwards; a snake is depicted as a lanchana on the pedestal; some times the number of serpent heads of the canopy is increased to seven or nine;[7] in some cases Dharanendra and Padmavati are shown on the pedestals.

MAHAVIRA

A beautiful bronze image of Mahavira in ardhaparyankasana from Salukki is one of the early specimens available in Tamilnadu. Another majestic image of Mahavira in kayotsarga posture is found at Singanikuppam in Tindivanam taluk. Both are assignable to 13th cent.A.D. and under display in the Govt. Museum, Chennai. Of these, the latter specimen deserves special mention for its slender body and charming face. However, the right hand is partly damaged. After the establishment of Jinakanchi Matha at Chittamur around the 15th or 16th cent.A.D. there was a rapid surge in the construction of structural edifices dedicated to Mahavira in places like Tirumalai, Tayanur, Tellaru, Tondur, Venpakkam, Kilvilvanam

etc.[8] Presence of bronze images of Mahavira in all these places, have been documented. These bronze figurines are rigid and display bulging eyes, sharp nose, compressed lips and a prabhavali adorned with triple umbrella over the head. In consonance with the stone sculptures, majority of the bronzes dated to 17th - 18th cent.A.D. contain lion emblem on the pedestals.

NEMINATHA

No reference about Neminatha is available in Jaina literature prior to 10th cent.A.D., though his early sculptural representations are found in places like Sittannavasal, Kazhugumalai, Utthamapalayam etc. Likewise, his bronze representation dated to early period is not available in Tamilnadu. A number of temples dedicated to Neminatha were built in places like Nelliyankulam, Edanemili, Nettapakkam, Chittamur etc. from 16th cent.A.D. onwards. The earliest Neminatha bronze image in Tamilnadu is the 16th cent.A.D. specimen belonging to the Jaina temple at Mylapore, now preserved at Elamkadu near Vandavasi. In this the Tirthankara is in standing posture on a pedestal containing a conch emblem. Apart from this other Neminatha bronze images are recent ones.

CHANDRAPRABHA

Chandraprabha was also popularly worshipped in Tamilnadu. Bronze images depicting Chandraprabha are found in places like Chittamur, Tirunarungondai, Nellaiyankulam, Venkunram, Kilsattamangalam, Perumandur, Edanemili, Eyyil etc. Among them, the one noticed at Tirunarungondai, dated to 13th cent.A.D., deserves special mention. It was donated by one Kadava chief, Alappirantan Mohan and was known

as 'Kachchinayaka' or lord of Kanchi. Scholars are of the opinion,[9] that the bronze was probably so named after the earliest Chandranatha temple at Jinakanchi(Tirupparuthikundram) of 8th cent.A.D. The image is in kayotsarga pose, with a square face, broad shoulders and narrow waist exhibiting the characteristic features of the later Chola style. Modern bronze figures of Chandraprabha found in other temples are of poor workmanship. They possess a triangular mark on the chest and the crescent emblem on the pedestal.

PADMAPRABHA

Stone sculptures representing Padmaprabha dated prior to 18th cent.A.D. are not found so far in Tamilnadu. Only modern bronze images are available at Vilukkam, Perumandur, Venkunram and Nelliyankulam. In all these, the Tirthankara is in kayotsarga posture. A lotus symbol is found on the pedestal.

SUPARSVANATHA

His images may be identified only with the presence of a swathika symbol and the serpent-hood, generally three-hooded serpent. An ancient bronze datable to 10th cent. A.D. from Salukki is one of the earliest specimens present in Tamilnadu. In this the Jina is in kayotsarga posture with a hooded serpent above his head. Similarly, a 13th cent.A.D. specimen from Devanankavundankidaiyur in Salem District, standing in kayotsarga, has a beautiful five hooded serpent canopy over the head. However, modern bronze images are available in places like Chittamur, Venkunram, Nelliyankulam, Tirupparuttikunram etc. In all these, he is in standing posture, with a serpent

canopy above the head and a swastika lanchana marked on the pedestal. At Vilukkam the serpent is descending down up to the ankle of the Tirthankara, which is quite interesting.

SUVIDHINATHA

He is known as Pushpadanta in Tamilnadu.[10] Though sculptural images of Pushpadanta dated between 11th and 16th cent.A.D. are available in places like Tingalur(11th cent.), Tirupparuttikunram (13th cent.), Tirupparambur and Torappadi(15th - 16th cent.A.D.), its metal form dated to early period has been not so far reported. However bronze images of modern period are found at Vilukkam, Edanemili and Nelliyankulam.

VAASUPUJYA

At Tirupparuttikunram within the Vardhmana temple complex, a sub-shine dated to 12th cent.A.D., dedicated to him is found. However, no bronzes of Vaasupujya assignable to early period are reported from Tamilnadu so far. Modern bronzes are available at Uppuvelur, Elankadu, Vilukkam and Nelliyankulam, where he is depicted in standing posture with the buffalo emblem carved on their pedestals.

ANANTANATHA

Anantanatha is known as Kalakala for rescuing his devotees from the clutches of Yama(the god of death).[11] A few bronzes dated to 19th - 20th cent.A.D. portraying Anantanatha have been reported from places like Melattipakkam, Vellimedupettai, Nelliyankulam and Elamangalam. Apart from individual depiction, he is also shown with thirteen other Tirthankaras around him. This type is called as Anantha Tirthankara

Pata[12] and special offerings are made during the Ananta Vrata or a 14-day observance of vow.

DHARMANATHA

The 13th cent.A.D. temple of Dharmanatha at Arungulam near Tiruttani, has a bronze image, coeval with the temple. Here, the Jina is standing in kayotsarga pose with a tall and slim body. The face of the image is highly worn out probably due to regular abhishekha and pujas. This specimen is said to be the earliest available bronze of Dharmanatha in Tamilnadu. However, modern metal icons of the Tirthankara are found in places like Perumandur, Venkunram, Nelliyankulam, Chittamur etc. and they do not possess the artistic splendour of the Arungulam specimen.

SANTHINATHA

He is the sixteenth Jina and the most popular Tirthankara in the other parts of India. To get rid of from epidemics, famine, fire and robbery, he is worshipped. But in Tamilnadu his worship has not gained much popularity. There is only one temple dedicated to this Tirthankara, dated to 16th cent.A.D., at Somasipadi near Tiruvannamalai, where too no early bronze image is found. However, modern ones are found in places like Nelliyankulam, Tindivanam, Venkunram, Chittamur etc.

KUNTHUNATHA

No ancient bronze of Kunthunatha is available, though the earliest temple dedicated to him at Karandai, is dated to 9th cent.A.D. However, his bronze images belonging to modern period are found at Nelliyankulam and Perumandur with the goat lanchana on the pedestal.

MALLINATHA

Temples in honour of Mallinatha, dated to 16th - 17th cent.A.D. are available in places like Mannargudi, Perumugai, Kunampadi and Manjappattu. The temple at Mannargudi contains a 16th cent.A.D bronze image of Mallinatha wherein; he is shown in kayotsarga pose with a well proportioned body and a triangular mark on the chest. No lanchana is found on the pedestal.

Apart from these, there are other Tirthankaras such as Ajitanatha, Sambhavanatha, Abhinandana, Sumathinatha, Sitalanatha, Munisvrata, Vimalanatha, Aranatha and Naminatha, who do not occupy the position of principal deity in any Jaina temple in Tamilnadu. Rarely they are found in the modern temples made either of stucco or bronze.

Besides, all the 24 Tirthankaras are also worshipped in one group. This form is called as Chaturvimsatimurti. Normally in this group one Tirthankara, be it Mahavira, Adinatha or Parsvanatha, occupies the central position and others are shown around. Modern figures of Chaturvimsati Tirthankaras are found in places like Perumandur, Nangavaram, Tirunarungondai, Vidur, Vilukkum, Chittamur etc.

BAHUBALI

Though he is not a Tirthankara, being the son of Rishbhanatha, he is given importance in the religious worship of Digambaras. It is said[13] that, Bahubali was the first individual to attain siddhahood in the current epoch. In Tamilnadu, sculptural image of Bahubali is available until 15th cent.A.D. Thereafter, metal cast images were added more in number, in all the prominent temples. In all these specimens, his body is very rigid, angular, with bulging eyes and sharp nose, creepers entwining both the legs and arms and snakes

on either side. Further, a triangular mark, symbolizing mahapurusha lakshana is incised on the right side of the chest. However, these later specimens lack the striking beauty of the early period.

YAKSHAS

Scholars are of the opinion that the yakshas were the folk deities of early inhabitants of India and subsequently incorporated into Jaina pantheon as attendant deities.[14] There are 24 yakshas, among them only a few are popular in the sculptural art in Tamilnadu.

DHARANENDRA

Dharanendra and Padmavati, who are husband and wife, are quite familiar in Tamilnadu. It is well known, that Dharanendra is the serpent king, who is said to have protected Parsvanatha from Kamata. Hence, he is shown in the form of a serpent over the head of Parsvanatha. Independent images of Dharanenda either in stone or metal are evidently absent till 18th cent.A.D. His anthromorphic representation on metal seems to have began in around 19th cent.A.D. as attested to by the presence of bronze icons in places like Perumugai, Tirupparuttikunram, Chittamur, Tirunarungondai, Vilukkam, Karantai, Kilsattamangalam, Viranamur, Vengunram and Nelliyankulam. In all these places, he is depicted either in sukhasana or samapada with four arms. Upper arms carry either ankusa and pasa or a serpent and a fruit. The number of serpent-hood over the head ranges from seven to nine. His emblem of tortoise is depicted on the pedestal.

SARVAHNA

He is the attendant Yaksha of Neminatha. A stumpy figure carved on the pedestal of a Tirthankara

at Kazhugumalai, dated to 9th cent.A.D. seems to be the earliest stone specimen in Tamilnadu. The metal form of this yaksha is found since the 13th cent.A.D. The image at Tirunarungondai dated to 13th cent.A.D. is the earliest bronze icon of this yaksha. It is with four arms and standing beautifully in dhvibhanga posture. The upper arms carry ankusa and pasa and the lower arms in kataka and varada mudras. A dharmachakra in prayoga form is found over his karanda makuta. Skandamala, keyuras, haras and other ornaments are noticed on the specimen. On the basis of the stylistic features it is dated to 13th cent.A.D. In the same temple, yet another bronze dated to 16th cent.A.D. is found. It is more ornamental, having a dharmachakra on the crown, holding pasa and ankusa in the upper hands whereas the lower hands are in abaya and varada. More bronzes portraying Sarvahna, dated to 19th - 20th cent.A.D. are available in almost all Jaina temples. They are in standing posture without any flexion on the body. Of the four arms, upper arms are holding pasa and ankusa, the lower arms are in abaya and varada. A dharmachakra is found on the makuta in discular a form, instead of prayoga form. The charm and exquisite beauty noted in the bronzes of 13th cent.A.D. are totally absent in the specimens of later period. The slender limbs have become very rigid and more importance is given to decoration. The face turns almost to square in shape. In most of the cases elephant is engraved as emblem on the pedestal. It is pertinent to mention here that in all the festivals of the Digambara temples in Tamilnadu, the processional image of Tirthankara is led by Sarvahna.

Apart from Dharanendra and Sarvahna other yakshas are rarely represented in Tamilnadu. One such

bronze image depicting Patala yaksha, the attendant deity of Ananthanatha is found at Venkunram. Assignable to 19th-20th cent.A.D. he is seated on a lotus with three heads and six arms. A three-hooded serpent canopy is found over the crown. Ankusa, pasa, sula, plough, and fruit are in his five arms, while the sixth arm is in abaya. On the pedestal, makara is depicted as his lanchana.

YAKSHIS

The antiquity of yakshi-worship in Tamilnadu could be pushed back to the 3rd cent.A.D. as it is referred for the first time in the Silapathikaram.[15] It is mentioned that, Poonkan Iyakki, a yakshi, whose eyes resemble the flowers, was worshipped by Madhuri. The literary compositions of medieval period are silent about yakshi. However, from 8th cent.A.D. onwards yakshi in sculptural art began to appear. In Tamilnadu Ambika, Padmavati and Jvalamalini are the yakshis popularly worshipped by the Digambaras.

AMBIKA

The legend[16] connected with Agnila(later known as Ambika), the wife of a brahmana, who was subsequently reborn as Ambika yakshi is well known. She is quite popular in Tamilnadu and is known as Dharmadevi, Kushmandini, Bhagavati, Varasundari, Ponniyakki and Alagammai. Among these, first two names are quite popular among the Tamil people. Generally Ambika is depicted either with two hands or four hands holding a bunch of mangoes, pasa, ankusa and a child, seated on her lap or standing nearby. The lion mount stands behind her.

The earliest bronze image of Ambika in Tamilnadu is the one found at Tirunarungondai. In

this specimen, she is beautifully standing in tribanga posture on a lotus pedestal. Along with her a lady attendant and a son are shown on either side. She is with two hands; right in katakamudra, left in lolahasta. The melting contour of its body, attenuated waist, descending breasts and elongated limbs add beauty and charm to this specimen. All these are the characteristic features of the 10th cent.A.D. early Chola art. In the same place, yet another bronze image dated to 11th cent.A.D. is available. Though it has similar attributes as in the earlier one, the limbs have become rigid and the waist has become broader. One more image of this yakshi, dated to 13th cent.A.D., from Senkanikuppam, is at present under display in the Madras Museum. In this, Ambika is standing in tribanga posture with two hands, right in kataka mudra and left touching the head of a lady attendant, who stands by her side carrying a garland. Her son is standing to her left side. On the basis of the stylistic features, the specimen is dated to 13th cent.A.D. Some more bronzes of Ambika are available again from Tirunarungondai, Vidur and Venkunram. The yakshi at Tirunarungondai is in tribanga posture, with right arm holding a lilly, while the left in lolahasta. She wears a karanda makuta, surmounted by leaves of areca tree. Her two sons are seated on her either side. On the pedestal a lady attendant and a lion are depicted.

On the basis of the available specimens, it is known that a subtle change in the iconography of Ambika had taken place since 16th cent.A.D. i.e. majority of the images in stone were depicted in seated posture. However, at Venkunram a standing Ambika dated to modern period (20th cent.A.D.) is available. In this period, as usual, her right arm continues to hold a lilly, whereas her left is in varada mudra instead of

lolahastha. Except her lion mount, two sons and attendant are not shown in these specimens.

PADMAVATHI

She is the yakshi of 23rd Tirthankara Parsvanatha. She is the consort of Dharanendra the serpent king and called by various names such as Padma, Padmavadana, Padmahasta and Kamalavati. She is commonly depicted with two arms. Sometimes her two arms hold an umbrella protecting the head of the Jina. In some cases she is in anjali. A serpent hood is seen over her head. Her mount is kukutasarpa. Though the cult of Padmavati was popular in Karnataka, she has not been worshipped widely in Tamilnadu. No bronze image of this yakshi datable to early period is available in Tamilnadu. Only modern bronzes are available in places like Perumugai, Melattipakkam etc. In these places, she is depicted in sukhasana with four hands, the upper hands hold pasa and ankusa and lower hands are in abaya and hold a fruit. There is a five-hooded serpent over the karandamakuta. Her mount kukutasarpa is depicted on the pedestal.

JVALAMALINI

Being the yakshi of Chandraprabha, the 8th Tirthankara, the Svetambaras call her Bhirkuti and she is having four arms; cat or swan is said to be her vehicle. The Digambaras consider her as a goddess with eight arms possessing chakra, arrow, pasa, shield, bow and a fish. Buffalo is her vahana. Her worship was popular as early as 9th or 10th cent. A.D. in Karnataka.[17] However, in Tamilnadu stone sculptures of Jvalamalini appear only from 18th cent.A.D. onwards in places like Ponnur, Nelliyankulam,

Perumandur, Chittamur, Vidur etc. Simultaneously metal figurines of this yakshi are also available in places like Venkunram, Nelliyankulam, Perumandur, Chittamur, Vidur, Elankadu etc. The bronze specimen at Venkundram dated to 18th cent. A.D. does not differ iconographically with the stone representation of yakshi. Here, she is in sukhasana posture and endowed with eight hands,in which she carries sula, chakra, arrow, pasa, bow, fruit, fish and one arm in abaya. Around the makuta, jvala is depicted. In the center of her crown, a miniature carving of Jina image is depicted. She almost resembles Brahmanical Kali or Bhadrakali. Such representations of Jvalamalini on metal are also found at Ponnur and Elankadu, which are dated to medieval period.

OTHER DEITIES

Saraswati, Brahmadeva and Ksheratrapala are some of the other deities in Jainism for whom bronzes have been made only in the modern times. The iconographical features of these bronzes almost resemble Brahmanical deities.

SARASWATI AND BRAHMADEVA

She is also called as Vakdevi, Jinadevi, Jinaaisvarya, Kalaimagal and Srutadevi. However, the name Jinavani is popular. She must be shown in sukhasana with four arms holding ankusa, pasa, akshamala and pushtaka and ankusa or kamandala. A beautiful bronze image of Jinadevi from Salukki, dated to 12th cent.A.D. presently in the Madras Museum, in ardhapadmasana with the above said attributes, portrays the Chola school of workmanship. Similarly, Brahmadeva is another minor deity. Certain elements from the folk deity Aiyanar and brahmanical deity

Brahma, seem to have gone into the final make up of Brahmadeva. His cult was popular at Tirunarungondai, where a beautiful bronze image of Brahmadeva dated to 19th cent.A.D. is under worship. He is accompanied by Purna and Pushkala. Brahmadeva is in ardhautkutikasana on an elephant, with jatabhara, holds a lakuda in his right arm, left stretched out arm and rests on left knee. There is also a yogapatta, binding his legs with the body.

KSHETRAPALA

He is the protector of kshetra or a place. His vehicle is dog and he is represented nude. The earliest representation of Kshetrapala is the rock-cut specimen at Then-Tirupparankundram near Madurai, where it is dated to 9th cent.A.D. Thereafter only around 19th cent.A.D. Kshetrapalas images had been consecrated within the temple precincts in places like Tirunarungondai, Perumandur and Uppuvelur. Bronze images of modern period are available in places like Vilukkam, etc. In these specimens, he is shown in standing posture with a dog facing left. He is with a jvalakesa and having four arms. The upper arms hold a damaru and ankusa, whereas the lower arms hold kapala and sword. He is wearing a ghantamala. A miniature carving of a Jina is found in the center of jvalakesa.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing study reveals that the Tirthankaras were depicted in metal, right from 8th cent.A.D.in Tamilnadu. However, till 16th cent.A.D. they are found scarcely. Only thereafter, more number of bronzes is available. Probably celebration of more festivals in the Jaina temple could be one of the reasons for the

increase in the number of bronzes after 16th cent. A.D. Though, Tirthankaras are mostly depicted in seated form in stone; the bronze images portray them always in standing posture.

The study unfolds, that the earliest known bronze image of Tirthankara in Tamilnadu is that of Parsvanatha dated to 8th cent.A.D., now under display in the Madras Museum. Among the Tirthankaras, Rishabanatha was often illustrated on bronze. This indirectly shows the popularity of the worship of Rishabanatha among the Jains. Similarly, among the yakshas, Dharanendra was most popular; likewise, among the yakshis, the worship of Padmavati, Ambika and Jvalamalini was very common in Tamilnadu. The earliest known yaksha in the form of a bronze image is that of Sarvahna dated to 13th cent.A.D. found at Tirunarungondai. From the same place, we have the earliest known metal cast of Ambika yakshi dated to 10th cent.A.D. It may not be out of context to mention here, that the occurrence of numerous bronze images of yakshis reveals the wide popularity of their cults in late medieval times, similar to the proliferation of Amman cult in Brahmanical religion. Very likely, the yakshi cult served as a catalyst to the growth of Jainism in Tamilnadu.

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5

JAINA PAINTINGS

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Paintings have been an integral part of the artistic tradition in India; it has evolved along with other traditions like the sculptural and architectural art of India, often complimenting and sometimes even enhancing their richness and grandeur. Art in ancient India was not merely an illustration of lines and figures; it was of a sublime nature, exhibiting loftiness in vision and perfection in execution. Perhaps, this perfection was achieved because art was considered as a "tapasya" or penance and not as a mere performance of action.

The philosophy of aesthetics often equates beauty with bliss. Paintings when beautifully executed, bring forth a spontaneous expression of joy, which translates as bliss in the spiritual and philosophical parlance. Thus, paintings well executed have a soothing effect similar to musical compositions which leaves audiences in a stupor of joy and rumination.

Indian paintings could be classified into various schools of art, which had both naturalistic and

conventional modes of execution; both reflect beauty and symmetry of different dimensions. There was a gradual evolution in the techniques and depictions of various themes and motifs reflecting the changes taking place in the different aspects of society. However, it seems that the general trends of evolution and development in Indian art were mostly common to South Indian art also. Though, at different times certain unique aspects do emerge in the paintings of the South.

The earliest available painting in the Tamil country belongs to the Pallava period. But, the tradition of painting in this region must have existed from the very early times. Sangam literature is full of references to paintings made on different mediums and the processes and methodology involved in the execution of art. One of the five major epics Manimekalai refers to "Oviya Chennul" as a treatise on paintings which described the various modes and apparatus involved in the execution of paintings . This book is also supposed to deal with techniques of drawing, both stationary and moving objects. Sangam works like Paripadal , Nedunalvadai and the older of the twin epics Cilapathikaram also mention the presence of paintings.

The Jains of the Tamil country too had a strong tradition of painting spanning over a period from the Pallavas down to the present century. Examples of ancient Jaina paintings are found at Armamalai, Sittannavasal, Tirumalai, Tiruparuttikunram and Karandai, while paintings spanning the period from 18th century A.D. to 20th century A.D. are found at Vidur Perumandur and Melsittamur.

Armamalai

Armamalai is located four kilometres north of Malayambattu village in the Gudiyattam taluk of Vellore district. Paintings from here were first reported by Robert Sewell in 1882, but, they were first studied by Joveau Dubreuil only in 1916. Though later C.Minakshi reported these paintings in 1939, she also did not study them in detail.

It was studied in detail only by Edward Montgomery and S.T.Bhaskaran who published an article describing these paintings in Lalit Kala in 1974 . Accordingly,the paintings in this site are found on a hill within a natural cavern, which houses a mud brick built temple also. In the cavern, towards the east, the roof is fully covered with paintings obscured by soot. Here, the colours used include ochre for the lotus buds and flowers, on an ochre background, all executed on a white plaster base. There are also designs of small green circles painted on the same area around the flowers.

Towards the western side of the roof, there are six patches of paintings more clearly visible. Once the entire western side must have been painted of which, only patches remain now.

The largest of these patches has circular floral designs with a similar colour scheme as above. The patch of painting adjacent to it has depictions of a lotus pond with large green coloured leaves and lotus flowers in ochre. There are also remains of an arc like object which might have been the trunk of an elephant.

Of the remaining four patches, two show human figures. Of these, the first patch has human figures, a couple are shown riding an animal which can be identified as a bull. The lady has a lithe and delicate

form; her right arm is placed on her hip and left raised. Similarly, the sturdier form of the male once perhaps firmly clasped the reins of his steed (that portion of the painting has fallen of). Both the figures are beautifully bejewelled and clad in dresses which have floral patterns. The entire picture brings about a sense of curtailed movement, suggested by the rearing animal and the representation of the riders tilted backwards.

Another patch of paintings has the remnants of the hind portion of a bull in which each and every organ is depicted clearly, the animal is surrounded by clouds. The hooves of the animal in air suggest firm movement. Representation of the riders atop the animal are totally missing except for a beautifully decorated foot of one rider and the right arm with a cloth draped of other rider. Both the animals have been drawn in red ochre lines with a black lining in some portions. Descriptions given in the Sripurana of the celestials of various regions suggest that one of the 16 Kalpavasidevas, Mahendra had the bull as his vahana while Anata and Pranata two other devas had the bull as their cognisance. In all probability, these depictions of the bulls may have denoted that one of these Kings of the celestials descending from the heavens (suggested by the clouds in the paintings); perhaps to offer salutations to the Tirthankaras.

Below these panels, there are paintings of a hamsa with small wings and pointed beak, painted on the ochre and black outline similar in form to those found at Ellora and Sittannavasal. These paintings have been dated by scholars to the 7th - 9th centuries A.D.

In this period, various religious concepts and hard abstract ideas of Jaina philosophy, were adroitly

expounded with the help of graphic depictions in the form of paintings and sculptures by the monastic orders of the Jaina religion. They were able to highlight the important tenets of the Jaina religion in a succinct manner and were also able to underscore the importance of an austere life and a life of renunciation as exemplified by the Tirthankaras and acaryas. While for the laity it was an introduction to the path which could lead them to this "Idyllic" state. For the young ascetics also , it was their ultimate aspiration which was portrayed and it would have served as an inspiration for them to attain a similar state of bliss. In a sense, it was an adulation of the "Ideal" state for mankind, as against the worship of an "Idol".

As already seen, Armamalai was one such centre where perhaps efforts in this direction were initiated, another such effort at burgeoning these ideas of the idyllic state seems to have resulted in Sittannavasal.

Sittannavasal

Sittannavasal or Annavasal as it is known today is a village about sixteen kilometres north west of Pudukottai. On the outskirts of the village towards the east, is located a small hillock. On the eastern side of the hillock is located a cavern which has Tamil Brahmi inscriptions. This cavern cannot be reached easily, as on the eastern side, it overlooks a sheer drop and the western side is rather steep and one is exposed to heavy winds as one climbs the cave.The Tamil Brahmi inscription in this cave testifies to the Jaina antecedents of the site which can be pushed back to the 2nd century B.C.

On the northern end of the same hillock facing the western direction is an easily accessible rock, where a cave temple has been excavated. The selection of

location for this cave temple was perhaps deliberate because it was convenient both for the ascetics and laymen to reach the cave. For the ascetics, it was far away from the settlement and there was a panoramic view of nature's abundant beauty below. For the sravakas and sravikas too, this cave is quite easily accessible if they wished to listen to discourses from the acaryas. The location of this cave temple is thus in contrast to the earlier cavern which was an exclusive area demarcated for the monks who spent their lives in extreme and austere conditions, typical of the early monastic phase of Jainism in the Tamil country.

This later cave temple was renovated in the 9th century A.D by Srimara Srivallabha at the instance of the monk Ilan Gautaman. Portraits of both the ascetic and his benefactor have been painted on the pillars suggesting their active involvement in the enterprise of embellishment of the cave.

The cave at Sittannavasal has a sanctum and an ardhamandapa. In the wall of the sanctum and portico outside, there are sculptures of a monk and Tirthankaras. The entire cave including sculptures was painted, of these, paintings are now found only on the pillars and ceiling of the porch.

Many scholars like Joveau Dubreuil, T.N.Rama chandran, Stella Kramrisch, S.R.Balasubramaniam and C.Sivaramamurti have all studied and analysed these paintings and have written on the style and content of the paintings. But, it was only K.R.Srinivasan who gave an entirely new dimension to the history of paintings, with his significant paper on the date of paintings.

In the Sittannavasal cave , there are a variety of paintings, like that of celestial nymphs dancing,

portraits of a King and Queen and perhaps their preceptor on the pillars. Apart from this on the extensively painted ceiling, there is a carpet of floral designs embellished beautifully with swans and rosettes.

The ceilings of the sanctum and mandapa are covered with a depiction of a lotus pond alive and throbbing with activity. In this pond, there are monks gathering flowers, fish, duck, crocodiles and other animals, all within the same space signifying the universality of life and existence; but at the same time also suggesting that different physical forms are attained by souls on the merit of their performance of good or evil action. The calm countenance of the young monks as they perform their spiritual chore in serene rumination is in contrast to the vibrant and active nature of the other life forms such as fish or duck as they go about their natural activities stirring the entire area into life; even the lotuses which seem to sway in the gentle breeze effectively indicate movement. It is in quintessential, a calm celebration of life and living and perhaps wants to convey the purpose of life and the directions one must take to achieve deliverance from the cycles of birth and death.

This painting of the lotus pond is identified to be that of the "Katika Bhumi", which is a significant pavilion of the Samavasarana. The Samavasarana itself was perhaps adopted as a pivotal symbol of the Jaina religion by the monks as it conveyed the essence the Jaina religion. The term Samavasarana, as Ramachandran puts it, is a compound of two words, "sama" meaning general or common and "avarsara" meaning opportunity; effectively this renders the Samavasarana as a platform which gave equal opportunity for any life form or soul, from animals to

men to hear the world teacher, for the acquisition of divine knowledge which would lead one to spiritual emancipation; which was the central focus of the Jaina religion and was not the privilege of a select few alone.

That is why perhaps, this motif was chosen time and again by those who commissioned the paintings, as it conveyed to the lay person the uniqueness and exemplary dictates of being Jaina devotees.

Similarly, the dancers were perhaps symbolically represented to convey the joy one would experience on witnessing the Lord in the Samavasarana. The joyful disposition of the dancers captivates the mind and catapults the viewer to a higher plane of spiritual experience, as one witnessing the Lord in his Samavasarana would feel.

On the other face, we have the royal couple who are depicted with a benign countenance exalting in their munificence and spiritual fulfilment under the guidance of their preceptor, who is also depicted beside them. Their countenance speaks of subtle majesty against the grandeur of their position indicated by the significant ornamentation of their crowns.

Apart form this, there are elaborate floral patterns, representation of ducks with floriated tails and other decorative motifs all adding to the richness of the entire composition. According to scholars, these motifs have a lot in common with similar motifs found at Ellora.

The purpose behind the excavation of the cave and embellishing it with paintings in this period was perhaps to provide the Jaina laity with a beautiful canvass which evoked both religious fervour and at the same time conveyed the message of the Lord and beauty of bliss.

Tirumalai

Another important Jaina centre which bears paintings is Tirumalai near Polur in the Tiruvannamalai district. On the lower elevation of a hill nearby the Tirumalai village, there is a temple dedicated to Neminatha, known as the Kundavai Jinalaya .Cola monarchs and later the Vijayanagar kings endowed grants to this temple. On top of the hill, there is a colossus of the same Tirthankara, who is addressed to as Shikamaninatha. In the vicinity of the temple on the rock face of the hill, there is a natural cave which has reliefs of Tirthankaras, an yaksi and Bahubali. This cave is partitioned by brick walls to form three small cells. On these walls and the ceilings of the cells there are paintings belonging to the Vijayanagar period; traces of an earlier phase of painting is also noticed.

The paintings of Vijayanagar period, depict the Samavasarana of Tirthankara, identified as Neminatha by scholars . Apart from this, in the inner most cells of the cave, there are paintings recounting the story of the life of Agnila or Ambika yaksi. A local tradition attributes Tirumalai or Vaigavur as it was known earlier as the place where the myth associated with Agnila had occurred. Apart form this there are paintings of two Dvarapalakas on either sides of the entrance to the cave and decorative patterns fully cover the ceiling.

On the eastern wall of the cell where the Samavasarana of the Tirthankara is depicted, paintings of an earlier phase have been noticed where the plaster and paintings of the later Vijayanagar period have fallen off. The remaining patches of this earlier phase exposes paintings of a female deity, standing below a

tree laden with flowers and fruits; several other celestials are shown worshipping her. This was perhaps an early painting of Ambika yaksi, datable to the phase before the Vijaynagar paintings.

These and the later paintings at Tirumalai have been studied by scholars like, Stella Kramrisch, C.Sivaramamurti, K.V.Soundarajan and others. They have described the Samavasarana paintings and those of the yaksi also.

The painting of the Samavasarana is executed on the brick walls of the outermost cell. One of the components of the Samavasarana, the Lakshmivara mandapa covers the entire height of the wall. Enclosing this structure both on the top and bottom are ornate and decorative borders with a band of hamsas, which converge on top of the Tirthankara where a kirtimukha motif is depicted.

The painting of the Lakshmivara mandapa is faded, but it exactly recalls descriptions of it given in texts like the Sripurana. It is a circular pavilion which has its focal point, the Gandhakuti or the perfumed hall, where the Tirthankara is shown seated preaching to the world.

Four horse shoe shaped entrances have been provided from the four main cardinal directions, dividing the circular pavilion into four quarters, this is further divided into smaller sections called the kosthas. Each of these kosthas were provided for souls in different stages of spiritual evolution, like animals, human beings or celestials who had come together to hear the Jina's divine discourse.

As we go in a clockwise direction, these kosthas are occupied by the Bhavanavasidevas on the top followed by the Vyantara, Jyotishka, Kalpavasidevas,

then come the kings and laity. After the Kings in the next koshta are depicted animals, followed by monks and in the following koshta there are depictions of nuns and Sravikas, followed by other women of celestial origin. The koshtas and the occupants of these divisions are very deftly delineated.

As described above, in one of the koshtas are depicted a group of Kings, in which each of their bejewelled countenance is very minutely captured by the artist. The outlines are in red and their eyes wide open and fixed are sharply executed in black. In the adjacent chamber, animals both wild and domestic find place; they include an elephant, a donkey, an antelope, a bull, dog, goat and even a cheetah and a lion. The depiction is crowded but, presents an interesting group of both the carnivorous wild animals and domesticated animals together, perhaps suggesting that their universal instinct at this instance was only to listen to Lord's discourse eclipsing all their natural animal instincts.

This is followed by a kostha of nude monks sitting with the same intention. The alternating depiction of these souls significantly suggests the universal and the all encompassing nature of the Samavasarana of Tirthankara.

Adjacent to the kostha of monks is a group of nuns clad in white garments totally covering their heads and listening attentively. They are depicted in profile with eyes projecting; this helps us to identify the approximate date of the painting. Similarly, other groups are also depicted each with its unique characteristic feature. Outside the circular pavilion in the right corner of the lower part, are depicted celestial nymphs joyfully playing various instruments and other

gods carrying their respective symbols and insignia of royalty all marching towards the mandapa.

The other portions of the ceiling are totally covered with decorative motifs. Apart from these paintings, another set of paintings are found in the inner chamber. There are three horizontal panels marked off by paint describing the story of Ambika or Agnila. Agnila was a pious lady who was banished by her husband Somasarman to wander in the forests with her two children, as she had offered the food meant to be consumed by Brahmins in the sraddha ceremony of her husband's parents to Varadatta, a Jaina monk. Later, Somasarman felt remorse for his action, came to take her home. But Agnila was frightened that her husband would again ill-treat her. So, she jumped over the cliff and died, only to re-emerge as yaksi Ambika. This episode is supposed to have taken place at Tirumalai, earlier known as Vaigavur and as a yaksi, she is supposed to have provided food for 8000 monks who came to Tirumalai.

Part of the myth associated with her is depicted in the three surviving panels of the innermost cell. Of these, in the top most panel Agnila is shown inviting two Jaina monks. In the central panel, she is shown offering food to them and in the last of these panels, she listens to their discourse.

On either side of the entrance to the cells containing the paintings, there are paintings of Dvarapalakas depicted on a red background. They have four hands of which the upper ones hold the snake and the lower ones hold in abhaya and varada. All these paintings have been dated to the 16th century A.D by scholars. The paintings at Tirumalai belong to a later more conventionalised phase of South Indian painting. The brush work here is constricted and cramped and

the expressions of subtle emotions and an inner harmony which comes out in the earlier paintings has been sacrificed as optimum use of available space and depiction of intricate details takes precedence in the artists mind.

Various colours like yellow, blue, dark blue and red have been used; while red has been used to mark facial features, jewels and other outlines, black has been used to sharply portray, the disproportionately large eyes. Conventionalised decorative patterns adorn the remaining portion of the ceiling.

A special feature noticed even in the early phase of paintings here, (identified as a transitional phase between Cola and Vijayanagar dated to the 13th - 14th century A.D) is perhaps the introduction of a new theme. Apart form the subject of the Samavasarana and Tirhtankaras, there was the introduction of a solitary figure of a yaksi. This is indicative of the fructification of the gradual changes that had occurred in the Jaina religion from the 9th century A.D onwards. The veneration of yaksis was by then, firmly a part of the Jaina mode of worship.

Tiruparuttikunram

Tiruparuttikunram, also known as Jina Kanchi, is an hamlet in the outskirts of Kanchipuram. This is another Jaina centre where paintings are found in the mandapa of an ancient Jaina temple called the Trilokyanatha temple (dedicated to Vardhamana). This temple was first constructed in the Pallava period, but was subsequently renovated in the Cola as well as Vijayanagar periods. It has a mandapa called Sangita mandapa, constructed by Irugappa, the general of Hari Hara II (14th century A.D). In this mandapa, we find paintings of two phases, one which is co-eval with the

construction of the mandapa and the second phase, belonging to the 17th century A.D.

The sangita mandapa is rectangular in shape and has four rows of pillars, running parallel to the mandapa in front of the shrine. These two mandapas, together form four aisles in which paintings are executed on the ceiling.

The earlier paintings are found on the third aisle from the verandah, depicting the most significant events in the life of Mahavira along with certain decorative patterns. The third aisle is vertically divided into four parts. Of these, the portions in the centre are bigger and occupy most of the ceiling. To the left of the central division, there are three horizontal panels demarcated by fine lines containing the dreams of Priyakarani and, the Lord's birth followed by his janmabisheka.

In the lower most panel, the artist captures Priyakarani as she anxiously narrates her dreams to a monk; the eagerness of the queen is beautifully caught by the painter. In the following panel, the artist is able to portray the feeling of discomfort of the pregnant queen in labour, her face looks excited as well as slightly concerned; her breasts are full with her abdomen slightly lowered as she is in labour. Similar emotions are also captured in the maid's face as she tries to keep her queen as comfortable as possible. The curve of the mouth in the queen face effectively brings out her subdued agony while, at the same time, the maid's mouth is portrayed in such a manner that it brings out the happiness mixed with anxiety as she realises the queen is about to deliver the heir to the throne.

The next painting is of the janmabhisheka. In this painting, Lord Vardhamana is depicted seated on

a throne. Saudharmendra and Sachi anoint him with milk, which is portrayed as thin strands of white. The divine elephant Airavata, mounted on whom the Master came, stands near the divine couple. His eyes too shine with eagerness as he watches the spectacle. To the right of the Lord, other celestials stand holding sacred vessels; one of them has fallen down as he doubted the holiness of the Lord.

In a panel directly above this, Saudharmendra is shown dancing in the presence of the Tirtankara. The following panel shows how Mahavira subdued Sangama, who had (assuming the form of a snake) entwined himself around the tree just by exerting pressure on his tail with His legs. The gentle strength of the Tirtankara is clearly manifest in this episode. To the left of this panel, the enthronement of the Tirtankara is depicted. The rest of the painting is lost. The remnants of this painting have depictions of a chauri-bearer, four celestials with wings and the Sun and the Moon paying obeisance to the Tirthankara.

Towards the north of the ceiling, a group of women riding horse back in circle is painted. Of eight figures, only three remain. The painting effectively captures their excitement and exuberance as they move. Their dresses have complicated patterns on them. The central part of this composition is occupied by Saudharmendra on Airavata. These perhaps formed the group of celestials who had come to watch the coronation of the Mahavira.

Towards southern end of the ceiling is found, the usual canopy or the ullova pattern. This is a theme which has been persistently used in the Jaina paintings from very ancient times. In the remaining portion of the paintings in the ceiling are seen, rows of circles and circles having a rosette in the centre,

intersected by squares. All this is executed on a red background, which has circles drawn in white; the square borders are in black with yellow colour inside.

The early paintings which occur in the Sangita mandapa are of a completely different genre, when compared with the later examples. They exemplify the dexterity of the painter. There is economy, fluidity and firmness in their mode of execution. These paintings are done on a plain background and the subject is restricted only to the main events and characters involved.

Not many colours were used by the artist, but the colours used are all rich and striking. Red was used as the background, white and yellow were used to colour the bodies of various figures and the outlines were executed in black. It is also worthy of note that the faces have arched eye brows, wide eyes and nose extending in line with the eyebrow; none of these paintings have projecting eyes, a feature common to Jain manuscripts and wall paintings of a later period in Tamil Nadu.

Various emotions which form part of the events depicted are also easily captured, like the eagerness of Priyakarani to unveil the message of her dreams, her discomfiture as she is in labour, the happiness of the celestials as they perform the janmabhisheka and the innate strength of the Lord as he subdues Sangama. These perhaps represent a transitional phase of painting from Cola to the Vijayanagar period.

Paintings of a later date belonging to the 17th century A.D are also found in the same mandapa. The life of Rsabhanatha is depicted in them. They are painted from the northern end of the first aisle to the major portion of the second, in a series of thirty seven panels. Of these, sixteen portray his earlier births and

the rest, his last birth as the Tirthankara. The story is depicted in progression from right to left with few exceptions. Important events such as the janmabisheka, the coronation of the Prince and his renunciation are all highlighted as single panels while, events like the procession of Gods who come to listen to the Tirtankara's sermons occupy more than one panel.

The life of Mahavira starts in the second aisle at the end of the narratives of Rsabha and continues in the verandah too.

Another interesting subject which has been added here, is the story of Krishna who was designated as the Vasudeva, who flourished during Neminatha's time; he is supposed to have been a cousin of Neminatha. The panels in Tiruparuttikunram depict the story of the birth and bala-lilas of Krishna.

The introduction of the story of Krishna as a subject of these paintings is worthy of note as it served to add to the popularity of the Jaina myths, and also impressed upon the minds of the people, the morals in them. Further, as it was a theme already popular with the Hindus, it served to unite the Hindu and Jaina religions with the purpose of encountering a common and more dangerous foe in the form of the Muslim invaders of Vijayanagar Kingdom.

The panels 73 - 82 are illustrations of Neminatha's life. However, these paintings have been badly affected by bio-deterioration caused by leaks in the roof and bat droppings. The only ones that remain are his birth, renunciation, initiation and his enlightenment; the Samavasarana is not depicted.

Most of the paintings have been done on a white ground. In the second aisle, a red background has been used. The story normally proceeds from left to

right (but there are exceptions as mentioned earlier). All actions are confined to a single plane. In panels where different events are painted in the same space, the difference is indicated by a change in the background or location like, in a palace or forest; they are not demarcated by lines.

It seems by the Vijayanagar period, there was a standardisation regarding the themes to be depicted and the manner in which they were to be depicted. Initially, it was perhaps only the Samavasarana or important events in the life of a Tirtankara which were depicted. Perhaps later in the Cola - Vijayanagar period, there was a slow transition with introduction of narrative themes with stories illustrated for easy comprehension of the laity. The labels added below, further aided this purpose and people were able to learn the myths about the Tirthankaras in an effortless manner.

As regards the technique, the artist has used many colours (in contrast to the earlier phase of the paintings in the same mandapa) such as red, green, yellow, black, white, blue and orange and a mixture of all colours. He has used a fine brush to capture minute details with great care.

The Tiruparuttikunram paintings are centred on the lives of Tirthankaras and the main occasions in their lives. They are narrative in character and they are basically meant to enumerate the stories and myths associated with the Tirthankaras. They are neatly organised and symmetrically painted. But, the paintings look repetitive as they describe similar events in the lives of the masters and can be identified only by the labels they bear. As most of the figures look very similar, monotony sets in as regards the theme. But the symmetry and penchant for detail of the Jaina

artist is very significant. While comparing them with similar Hindu paintings of the same period, they are more carefully planned and executed with a singular purpose of popularising the stories around the Tirthankaras and yaksi Ambika.

The painting of the story of Ambika yaksi is another interesting factor, as it indicates the immense popularity that the myth enjoyed amongst the Jaina laity. As already discussed above, the themes of the Jaina paintings of earlier periods was limited only to Tirthankaras. But, it is only in Tirumalai we come across the story of Ambika yaksi. This trend was perhaps carried on in the Vijayanagar period also. As by now, yaksi worship, especially that of Ambika had emerged strongly in the Tamil country.

The first instance where the myth was the subject of a painting was perhaps at Tirumalai which was the centre associated with Agnila or Ambika yaksi. Another centre where we find incidents of this yaksi's life painted are at Tiruparuttikunram which is the home of the manuscript which contains the Digambara version of the yaksi's life.

The story of Ambika yaksi is painted in two rows on the beams of the verandah. The various incidents in the life of Agnila are depicted in the paintings. The narrative runs from left to right. In the first panel, Agnila is shown seated with her husband. In the second panel, she is accompanied by her sons followed by some panels which depict her paying obeisance to the monk Varadatta and offering him food. In the fourth panel, she is offering food and placing it on the tray before the monk. The pious woman is painted in white and sage in black on a white background.

After this, the panels are damaged and from the remnants of the paintings, the rest of the story has to

be understood. Apart from this, on the eastern wall of the ardhamandapa of the three shrines, there are paintings of Ambika yaksi, Sarvahna yaksa and Brahma yaksa. This is perhaps the first time that these subsidiary deities are portrayed in the paintings. Obviously, reflecting the changes occurring in the religion. The changes that had occurred in the Jaina religion also get reflected in the paintings, as new themes like yaksas and yaksis were introduced along with the stories of Tirthankaras.

This tendency is noticed in Karandai too, wherein in the mandapa of the Dharmadevi shrine, the story of the yaksi forms an important part of the panels. The Karandai temple is about 20 kilometres from Kanchipuram and has paintings dated to the 18th century A.D. Now, only a few of them remain. In one panel, one of the figures sports a cap which is similar to the ones worn by the Muslims, corroborating an oral tradition which says that some Muslim rulers gave endowments to the Karandai temple.

Though now only a few paintings remain, the style and mode of execution suggests they belong to the 18th century A.D. The long slender forms of women and wide shouldered men, the motifs on the dresses, all suggest that they may even belong to an earlier period.

Vidur, near Tindivanam also has paintings of the life of Rsabha which belong to the 19th century A.D. The paintings contain smaller figures and the story of Nami-Vinami are clearly captured.

Perumandur, too has Jaina paintings describing the establishment of a matha by an acarya. These paintings are mostly lost. But, the remaining ones suggests they belong to the 19th century A.D. Apart form this, there are paintings of yaksas like Sarvahna

and yaksis like Padmavati and Jwalamalini, both executed in blue in the Malainatha temple at Melsittamur, suggesting that the artists were also diversifying the themes of their paintings, which by now was totally conventionalised and standardised. Only yaksis and yaksas and the Samavasarana were drawn, rarely symbols of the Jaina religion were drawn along with explanations. The paintings have become more educative in nature, with lesser aesthetic values in the previous and present centuries.

As we go through a brief survey of Jaina paintings in the Tamil country, we can see changing trends in the Jaina paintings over the various periods. From the available paintings which have with stood the ravages of time, we are able to discern that at different periods, different aspects of the religion were highlighted.

For instance, at the Armamalai and Sittannavasal caves, it is a reflection of the monastic nature of the religion with emphasis on the divine discourse of the Lord and on what the Jaina religion stood for in the Pallava and Pandya periods.

But in Tirumalai, the paintings within a temple complex are more conventionalised and bear evidences of the format which was being standardised in the Cola - Vijayanagar transitional phase. We also notice a fresh theme in the form of the story of Ambika yaksi was introduced in this period, again reflecting the changes that were slowly creeping into the Jaina religion. By the 16th century A.D., the Jaina religion had emerged as more stronger entity which had strong monastic orders as well as powerful groups of lay followers which included nobility, kings, queens, generals and ministers, apart from common people. The aspirations of these devotees were also changing with the times.

Hence, elements like the worship of the Jina - sasanadevatas were emerging more strongly to strengthen the development of the religion. The paintings in Tirumalai of the 16th century A.D mark these developments artistically, by adopting as one of its themes, the story of Agnila who was supposed to have lived in Tirumalai and served 8000 monks who came from other areas. The worship of this yaksi, which had its beginnings in the 8th century A.D. was firmly established by this period, so much so, individual shrines were constructed in her honour, hence there was a necessity to make people aware of the extraordinary myth associated with this yaksi. Unlike sculptures which conveyed the tradition within a single panel, the painter had the opportunity to make use of a larger canvass for narrating each and every episode in an elaborate manner.

Thus, helping the people to understand the importance of Jaina tenets through a pictorial assay of stories of the Tirthankaras and later the yaksi too (as we see in Tiruparuttikunram).

Some scholars feel the Jains adopted painting as against sculptural dedications as it was more affordable and economical both in terms of cost and time. But, apart from being economical it was able to convey graphically, the stories associated with great souls in an intelligible manner. Unlike sculpture which demanded a much higher and harder range of skills for execution and comprehension, paintings could be easily understood.

Further, many artisans from Vijayanagar were already working on beautifying the Hindu temples, this aided the efforts of the Jains who also wanted to both educate their followers and embellish their temples with the exemplary stories of their great souls.

The themes were now more detailed and less symbolic with efforts to capture the minute details of the stories of the Tirthankaras in their different births. This also served to help the Jains save their mythological and artistic heritage for posterity.

In this brief study of the Jaina paintings of the Tamil country, we see how these paintings bear testimony to contribution of the Jains to the artistic traditions of the Tamil land. We are also able to understand how the Jains adopted paintings as a means to express spiritual and religious tenets which every person should aspire for, in a manner which appealed both to lay worshippers and men of merit.

6

PROTECTED JAINA MONUMENTS

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Archaeological Survey of India has protected more than 5000 monuments as momuments of National Importance all over India. The criteria for declaring monuments as of National importance is that the monuments should depict unique cultural aspects of National value.

These monuments include, Hindu, Jaina, Buddhist, Islamic and secular structures. For the purpose of our discussion, this article covers only those Jaina monuments that are under the control of Archaeological Survey of India - Chennai Circle. Of the 2487 monuments protected by ASI Chennai Circle, 42 monuments are of Jaina affiliation. The activities of the Jainas has been predominant all over Tamilnadu and dates from 2nd century BC to 14th - 15th century. A.D. They include a wide variety of architectural embellishments from natural caverns to rock-cut temples and finally to structural temples. These monuments are situated in the districts of Madurai, Pupukottai, Tiruchirapalli, Villupuram, Vellore and Erode.

The monuments in Tamilnadu can be categorized into three types, ie., Early Natural Caverns, Rock cut cave temples and structural temples.

Early Natural caverns:

The salient features of these natural rock shelters are such that they are mostly shallow and are formed under one or more massive overhanging boulders that dot the hilly areas. A drip ledge is cut into the brow of the overhanging boulder for the entire length of the opening of the cave below to prevent rainwater from flowing inside. On the rocky floor of the cave a number of stone beds have been cut and chiseled smooth with one side raised a little to serve as pillows. A number of holes have also been cut into the open rock in front of the caves probably for providing temporary roof. These holy residences were mostly located near spring of water, which catered to the basic needs of the ascetics.

Such type of natural caverns protected by ASI include those at Kilavalavu, Kilakuyilkudi, Mettupatti, Alagarmalai, Thiruparankunram, all in the district of Madurai; Sittannavasal, Ammachatiram, Kulathur, Kudimiyanmalai all in the district of Pudukottai and Uttamapalayam in the district of Theni.

Kilavalavu is situated at a distance of 10 kms from Melur. About 1.6 kms southwest of the Kilavalavu village is a hill with huge boulders with narrow bases gradually spreading as they rise into spacious tops. The boulders all round is chiseled wherever the slopes run into the concave portions of the rock and shelters below it a number of beds, the pillow lofts of which converge to the base of the boulder and thereby give to the latter the appearance of petals spreading evenly from the stem of a lotus flower. A Brahmi inscription of 2nd

century B.C. is engraved directly below a chiseled portion of the rock. Similar boulders with numerous beds arranged in a circle round their narrow bases also exist in an adjoining hill and the openings all round are protected by pieces of piled up stone. The concentration of beds may probably indicate a heavy congregation of ascetics within a small radius.

Tirupparankunram: Six rock cut beds are chiseled out on the western slope of the cavern on the Tiruparankunram hill about 8 kms. from Madurai. Of these four are small ones roughly equal in size and two slightly bigger. The latter lie spreading east to west and are mutilated on their pillow sides. The four smaller ones are cut by the side of the other and are separated only by a very thin band of stone. They are too narrow even for a medium sized human to stretch freely. On the pillow side of the small beds are engraved four Brahmi inscriptions datable to first century BC to first century AD. A spacious vault measuring 56 ft in length north to south, 20 feet depth and 5' 10" in height encompasses the remaining part of the cavern, one or two cell like holes in the overhanging rock may be meant to prevent exposure to wind and few inches higher up the brow of the sheltering rock and across it full length the margin is chiseled off and cut into a narrow drain to drain off water. A similar groove cut into the floor at the broad entrance may have likewise served to drain the water from the sloping rock on the southern side of the cavern. The existence of foot holes leading to the cavern, cut deep into the rock were meant perhaps to receive poles which once supported the wooden railings. The perennial spring which is reached by a flight of crude steps only a few yards down the northern side of the cavern served as source of water supply. A

peculiar feature of this cavern is the presence of two low benches one measuring 5' by 1' 9.5" and the other 6' by 3'. On the northern side of the hill is a smaller cave with two beds but without inscriptions.

The later inscription is important as it reveals the contact between Tamilnadu and Ceylon. Two Jaina sculptures of Bahubali and Parsvanatha found near the caverns belong to the ninth century AD.

Mettupatti (second-first centuries B.C.) The Siddharmalai hill (hill of the Siddhas) in this village contains caverns with beds. The lower portion of the beds are fashioned in the form of the lotus petals, here again a pair of foot prints in relief with a lotus between the two, inside a circle are found. There are nine Brahmi inscriptions with the names of the donors. Caverns with or without beds are also found at Aivarmalai (Aiyampalaiyam), Kuppalanattam (Poygaimalai) and Palani (Panchavarpadukkai) all in Madurai district. No Brahmi inscriptions are found here but the Jaina associations are clearly indicated by the sculptures. (ninth century)

Alagarmalai: Situated at a distance of 20 kms northeast of Madurai is a range of hills of the same name. On this range between Alagarmalai and Kidaripatti is a huge cavern with beds. The way to the cavern appears to have been up a precipitous rock with narrow steps cut into at distances. The cavern spreading east to west is a spacious hall 80 feet. broad with an excellent spring in its right corner. The ceiling of the cave is quite high and the inscriptions are engraved at an inaccessible height on the brow of the cave. There are totally 13 Tamil Brahmi inscriptions, the largest number found in a single site and can be assigned to circa 1st century B.C. The stone beds are many and are of varying sizes scattered singly and in

groups over the whole surface of the cavern. The biggest measures 8' 7" by 3' 1", while the smallest is 6' 4" by 2' ¼". Neither are they cut deep into the rock nor are the pillow lofts appreciably raised. There are holes for wooden posts by the side of the narrow steps. Bigger pits in the rock are believed to have been mortars used by the resident mendicants for pounding medicinal herbs. The Brahmi inscription reveal the name of the different craft persons. A little below the cavern containing the stone beds is a huge boulder with the beautiful image of a seated Tirthankara and a vatteluttu inscription of the 9th century A.D. inscribed by its side. It records the work of having carved this sacred image was that of Jaina teacher Ajjanandi.

Uttamapalayam

A small rock outcrop called Karuppanaswami rock here with a tarn below, occurring outside the village was selected for Jaina carvings and records. The carvings represent Adinatha Mahavira, Parsvanatha's recurrent versions. The cave beds and carvings around Madurai, the capital of the Pandyan country form the most important group, historically and for the bas-relief sculptures.

Karadipatti (Kilakuyilkudi)

Kilakuyilkudi is about 12 kms. from Madurai. Here is a group of carvings on the inner face of a hemispherical cavity caused by an exfoliation and fall of the rock on the slopes of the hill and has Yakshi Ambika on her lion mount, Adinatha, Neminatha, Mahavira and a seated form of Ambika. Outside, on the brow of the scarp is another and larger figure of Mahavira which has been fully carved with pitha,

chauri-bearers, hovering gandharvas, and with scroll work with foliage above the triple umbrella not yet deeply relieved and somewhat incomplete. Inscribed records in vatteluttu occur under all the carvings referring to their context and characters.

The cavern at the middle of this hillock has a number of Jaina Tirthankara images sculpted in bold relief on a rock. They are depicted both in seated and standing postures. The inscriptions found here are in vattelutttu characters of 10th century and record existence of a palli and mention the names such as Gunabhadradeva and Chandraprabha.

Kalluthu situated 45 kms from Dindigul has a long but narrow natural rock shelter containing about 9 beds in two rows each with a pillow made on the rock surface. Above the pillow are label inscriptions in Brahmi letter of circa 1st century A.D. The inscription gives various names of persons who were in all likelihood members of religious orders.

There is a later shrine marked by a pada carved on the rock and approached by a flight of steps of low height by the side of the beds. There is a record of 14th century recording the padas belonging to those of Sahajanandanatha.

Panchapandava malai

This place near Arcot contains also an unfinished early Pallava cave-temple on the Panchapandavarmalai, at one end of which close the road but on the higher slopes of the hill is a boulder with a tarn below and some natural caverns. It contains an inscribed record of the 50th year of Nandippottarasar (Nandivarman II)

and refers to the figure of Ponni Yakshi whose image is also carved on the rock face.

Vallimalai

Vallimalai situated 32 kms. north-west of Vellore was a prolific Jaina centre in the 9th and 10th centuries.

There is a natural cavern with images carved on the inner sloppy ceiling and back wall of the rock and four inscriptions of the Western Gangas recording the founding of a Jaina shrine, setting up of Jaina images, etc. The Ganga king was Rajamalla, son of Bana Vikarama, grandson of Sri Purusha and the great grandson of Sivamara, as given in the record. He improved the cavern into a temple. An image of Devasena, a pupil of Bhavanandin who was a spiritual preceptor of the King. is also found here. This image and another Tirthankara carving, were set up by a Jaina preceptor Aryanandin. Even the back wall of the Subrahmanya cave shrine at this place contains Jaina carvings.

Kudagumalai

In the Kudagumalai, adjoining Ammachatram village, there are several natural caverns with polished beds on the floor, and drip ledge on the rock scarp face. Some Jaina images, damaged, including a standing figure of Tirthankara and circular stone pedestal with carvings (which might have been part of a manasthamba pedestal) are also found, ascribable to the nineth century A.D. Records from here of a Rajakesarivarman (9th or 10th century AD) refer to gifts of land in honour of the Tirthankara of the Triupallimalai in Vadasiruvai nadu.

ROCK CUT TEMPLE

Sittanavasal:

It is the most celebrated Jaina center in Pudukottai District and is situated about 15 kms from Pudukottai. On the hill near the village at an inaccessible height is a large natural cavern formed of a cleft which divides the over hanging top portion from the rocky floor below. This natural cavern situated on the eastern face of the hill is locally known as Eladipattam. Inside the cave are 17 beds some of which are damaged and all with pillow lofts. Round the top and left side of the largest bed is a deeply engraved Tamil Brahmi inscription. Some of the other beds bear later inscriptions. The stone bed with brahmi inscription was fashioned much earlier and remained the only one in the cave for centuries until the latter ones were added in the early medieval period. According to the earliest inscription the stone bed was specially made and gifted to a Jaina ascetic Kavuti who was born in Kumulur in Eruminatu (Mysore region) and the inscription is the earliest epigraphic evidence for contacts between Jaina communities in Karnataka and Tamilnadu.

Sittanavasal continued to flourish as a stronghold of Jaina sect from the 7th to the 9th century AD. A rock cut temple dedicated to three Thirthankaras had been hewn out in the northern periphery of the same hillock. This rock cut temple on plan comprises of an inner shrine 3.94 sq. mts and ardhamandapa infront measuring 6.8x2.27x2.58 mtrs. A doorway measuring 1.67 x .0.75 mtr approached by surul yali flanked steps leads into the inner shrine. In the façade are two massive square pillars and end pilasters. Beams are

also indicated with flexed cornice and fluted horizontal roll ornamented corbel below. The ceiling of the inner shrine shows paintings representing samavasarana. Lotus medallions adorn pillar and pilaster faces. In the niche on the northern wall of the outer hall is a figure of Jaina acharya seated in dhyana pose and cross legged. A single chatra is over the head to indicate that he is not a Tirthankara. An inscription on the pillar near it designates him as Tiruvasiriyan or the venerable Acharya. The opposite wall has a niche with a Parsvanatha figure seated with five hooded serpent above. The sanctum carries three images in high relief. The northern and central representing Adinatha and Mahavira have triple umbrellas while the southern one has only a single umbrella and was perhaps an Acharya. The entire surface of the wall, ceiling, pillars etc., were painted originally. Especially delightful is the depiction of the Samavasarana with the souls of the bhavyas inhabiting it, for hearing the Tirthankara's discourses. Before reaching the heaven, the souls are said to pass through several regions, including one of a lotus pool with birds, fish, animals like makaras, elephants and bulls and men sporting there. The bhavyas are represented in colours (lesya) deep red (padma) orange (pita) etc., which along with white (sukla) are considered as the colours of pure souls, as different from black (Krishna), indigo (nila) and grey, of the wicked souls. The paintings on the northern and southern façade pillars, of dancers with a pose of dandahasta or latavrischika, is even more beautiful and impressive and the natural hairdo and facial features, recall the best classical values near the Ajanta paintings of the first six centuries A.D., or the Sigiria (Ceylon) paintings of the 5th century A.D. The technique employed is of the fresco secco type, on a

lime medium. The colours used are black, green, yellow, orange, blue and white.

The side face of the temple carries an inscription of the Pandya King Avanipasekhara (Sri Mara Sri Vallabha) during whose time the mukhamandapa, apparently structural in stone, was added to preserve the main cave. The style is of the Pandyan cave-art, as found in several centers elsewhere, in southern Tamilnadu.

BAS RELIEF

Sirukadambur

The village is located about 3 kms from Gingee where a group of 24 seated Tirthankaras in low relief are shown in two rows on the hill known as Tirunatharkunru. The panel can be dated to the 9th century A.D. Found near the Tirthankara panel is a Tamil inscription in vatteluttu script. It records that one Candiranandi Asiriyar performed sallekana ie., fasting unto death, observing vow for 57 days. Another inscription found on the same rock records that one Ilaiyaparadar performed the same sacrifice in 30 days. On paleographic grounds the inscriptions are dated to 6th century A.D. The importance of the inscriptions is that they are the earliest records, referring to sallekana in Tamilnadu.

STRUCTURAL PHASE

Tirumalai

This important Jaina center situated in Polur taluk contains on the top of the hillock, at middle level (in the form of caverns) and at the foot level (in the form of two structural temples) richest historical and

art materials, by way of records, carvings and paintings, dating from the Rastrakuta times to the late Vijayanagar period. The hill is called Vaigaimalai, presumably from the name Vaigavur to the Jaina village at the foot of the hill. Even works like that of the building a sluice to the tank nearby was done at the times of Rajaraja I, by a certain Gunavirama munivan, and was named after his teacher Ganisekhara maruporchurian. (golden Surya Ganisekhara). Another record of the time of Rajendra Chola dated in his 12th year records gift to the temple called Kundavai Jinalaya, apparently named after Rajaraja's sister and thus of his time itself. Inscriptions of different periods engraved here give ample information of the endowments that were made to this temple. Even renovation works carried out in this temple are mentioned here.

The remains on the hill comprise a large monolithic image of Neminatha on the hill top and a series of caverns converted into abodes, with paintings of various geometrical and other designs. Besides these, of the two structural temples, one of them, with an intact gopura entrance, at the lowest length, has painted panel scenes displayed in the sanctum on the drum-like circular zone above the wall proper and at the base of the sikhara shell. These two temples dedicated to Vardhamana and Neminatha respectively are typical southern vimana types of the later Chola and early Vijayanagara period respectively. A large prakara wall skirts the whole complex at the foot of the hill. The Vardhamana temple rises in tritala with a circular grive and sikhara at the top. The interior plan is that of grabhagriha, ardhamandapa, mahamandapa all closed and an open mukhamandapa with a common flat roof terrace.

The Neminatha temple has again another prakara with a gopura entrance., the tower of the temple is missing. The grabhagriha is square and has an ardhamandapa of similar width, but a wide and closed mahamandapa and an open pillared mukhamandapa. The cornice of the mukhamandapa is massive, with kodungai ribbings underneath in typical Vijayanagar style. The topmost terrace also carries a small shrine which is attached to the bulge of the rocks scarp here and is in alignment with the other caverns. Excavations occur at different levels vertically, with partially structural floor and staircases, rising three stories high, with the topmost resting immediately under the horizontally projecting and overhanging rocky bluff. The storeys are characterized by corner cantoning pilasters but the top two talas also carry wall pilasters and niche figures of Ajitanatha, within a makara torana flanked by Maha Yaksha and Rohini, and with two standing elephants laterally shown carrying garlands on their slightly lifted trunks, against the varimana and vedi courses in applique stucco technique. The interior shrines at different levels show rock cut carvings of the Chola and Vijayanagara times. Of the Dharmadevi shrine with Gommata and two female attendants of the imperial Chola times (11th century A.D.) deserve attention. The main shrine is, however, for Neminanatha and is known as the Araikail (or the covered chambered temple) and is distinguished by extensive Vijayanagara and Nayaka paintings.

Vijayamangalam

This is one of the most important centers of Jainism in the western Tamil country, known traditionally as Kongudesa. One of the localities here

called Bastipura contains a structural temple of Chandraprabha. The various sub shrines of the temples once contained the images of Adinatha. Ananthanatha, Mahavira and Kushmandini Yakshi. There are also friezes representing the events of Adhinatha's life on the beams of the mandapa, probably of early Vijayanagara times. A separate temple intended for Adinantha is also found on the north western part of the temple compound. Inscriptions belonging to the Gangas, Cholas and Vijayanagara are found here.

The innermost complex comprises the grabha griha, ardhamandapa and mahamandapa capped by an octagonal shikara over a single tala. This brick structure is datable to the 9th century. A.D. The garbhagriha contains mural paintings, both figural and vegetal on its side walls. The large mahamandapa has a sub-shrine for Kushumandini Yakshi on the sourthern side and an exit on the north and the large open pillared mandapa along with a gopura on the eastern side and a granite manastambha, infront.

Jaina vestiges in Pudukkottai District

Apart form the early Jaina natural caverns already mentioned above, this district is very rich in Jaina relics. Most of the Jaina sites protected in this area are solitary sculptures mainly Tirthankara images found today in remote and not easily accessible corners. They include the images at Mylapatti, Annavasal, Melur, Nanjur, Letchumanpatti, Maradur, Valavampatti, Nallur, Puliyuri, Tiruppur and Tekkattur. These Jaina images mostly belonging to the 11th - 13th centuries A.D. show Tirthankaras seated in dhyana pose under a triple umbrella with attendants on either side. The whole group is surmounted by

elaborate scroll work and are placed on pedestal with yalis on either side.

Ancient Jain structural remains have been preserved at Sembattur, Puttambur, Chettipatti, Kannangudi and Mangatevanpatti.

Sembattur on the northern bank of the tank Palliyurrani, in this village, two images one of Mahavira seated in dhyana pose with a triple umbrella and another of a Yakshi have been preserved. The inscription under the image of the Yakshi has the name of its maker, Jayandonda Chola Muvendavalan of Kulamangalanadu identified with an official Rajaraja I. Alongside are seen 5 lion pillars of Pallava style. The seated lions are elegantly carved with gaping mouths and carry a shaft on their heads.

Puttambur Brick remains of a Jaina temple and a Tirthankara image seated in dhyana pose with triple umbrella with elaborate scroll work have been preserved here. The temple is locally called Ottaikovil. The exposed structure are plinths of the central shrine and two smaller shrines behind it. The plinths have stepped approaches. There are clear traces of the existence of another shrine parallel to the central shrine and of two sub-shrines in front. Fragments of the super structures have been unearthed and they belong to the early Chola period. Some of the Jaina images of this site now housed in the Kodumbalur sculpture-shed include Mahavira, Parsvanatha, Yalis and attendant devas. Another Jain Tirthankara image seated in sidhasana under a triple umbrella with attendants on either side is also one of the protected sculptures.

Kannangudi Traces of a ruined Jaina temple, with a prakara of laterite stones, an image of Mahavira in dhyana pose seated under a triple

umbrella with chowrie bearers on a pedestal supported by Yalis and a stone lying by its side have been preserved in situ.

Mangatevanpatti: Two Jain temples have been preserved upto the adhisthana level only, while one is a stone temple the other is a laterite temple. The stone temple faces east and has a sanctum 12 ft. square and an ardhamandapa. Near the laterite temple base are preserved two Jaina images of a Tirthankara identified as Adinatha and a Yakshi. The Tirthankara image, 5ft. in height, has a halo with flames with the usal triple umbrella. The yakshi is seated in Virasana pose, her left hand is placed on the thigh while the right holds the flower. There is a figure of a lion cut on the pedestal, below which are two male and one female.

Conservation carried out by the Chennai Circle in these monuments.

The natural caverns with inscriptions and bas relief's protected by the Circle are found in rocky areas and hence do not require much conservation as they are naturally protected. However, since most of these monuments are situated in granatoid areas which are susceptible to quarrying, care is being taken to prevent such activities. ASI, Chennai circle has been constantly monitoring and taking legal remedies as and when required. Since most of the caves are situated in hillocks which require an ardous climb, they have been provided with proper approach pathways and steps have been hewn in the natural rock so as to make the climb easy. Such approach pathways have been laid at Sittanavasal, Vallimalai, Sirukadambur, Tirupparan kunram to name a few. At these sites, hand railings have also been provided, as can be seen at Sittanavasal (Eladipattam).

Major conservation works have been carried out at Tirumalai where the Jaina temple is under worship. The entrance gopura has been water tightened to overcome leaking and has been replastered in lime mortar. The vimana of the Mahavira temple has also been water tightened. The front mandapa of the same temple which has settled was completed dismantled and re-set. The flooring of the Neminatha temple in the middle level of the complex was relaid. The vimana of the Neminatha temple situated at the foot hill was water tightened and the flooring of the temple was also reset. The flight of steps leading to this temple was relaid and a proper approach was given. The entire temple complex has been fenced.

The Jain temple at Vijayamangalam was in dilapidated condition when ASI Chennai circle protected it. The Vijayanagara style gopura of this temple was water tightened and replastered in lime mortar. The ruined shrine for Adinatha situated by the side of the main temple and preserved upto plinth level only has been totally dismantled and reset. As the temple is under worship a drain for the abishekha water has been provided.

7

JAINA MONASTERIES

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Jainism, one of the oldest living religions received support from the rulers of the Tamil Country. It is evident from the inscriptions, manifest from the last centuries of B.C. and literature. "Jains were the real apostles of culture and learning".[1] "They (the Jains) have also played a notable part in the civilization of the South India, where the early literary development of the Kanarese and Tamil languages was due, in a greater measure, to the labours of Jain monks".[2]

Jaina monks made the inaccessible caves as their abodes, far away from the human habitation. The Sramana movement opened it's ranks to the members of any age group or caste and to women. The season of rain-retreat witnessed extra-ordinary cultural activity in these abodes where people were taught and educated. These abodes became the main centres of learning. Such centres had developed at a number of places in all directions of the peninsular India. A number of very eminent Jaina preceptors flourished in these cloisters. Along with the monks, the Nuns also

contributed to literacy from the beginning. It is evident from the titles of Nuns occurring in the Jaina inscriptions from the early period ie. 3rd Cent. B.C. Jaina monks and Nuns along with their endeavor towards spiritual sublimity and liberation, attempted and successfully "developed a script for the language leading to literacy and the later efflorescence of Sangam literature in the early centuries of the Christian era.[3]

Pallis

The cave shelters or Jaina hermitages, are referred to in the inscriptions as Pallis. The literal meaning, sleeping place is applied to the shelters with stone beds and extended to temples. Since these shelters are also centres of learning, palli came to mean school also. It is used even in present day in the same sense. The land grants and endowments given to these pallis are called pallichandam. In Sangam literature there are references to these pallis and Jaina monks (e.g. Pattinapalai - 53 Madurai Kanchi 475-488, Akam. 123.) In Cilapathikaram there is a detailed description of the palli, Jaina nun - Kavunti, and charanas. In it the palli is prefixed `Adroit pious monastery'

"Arathurai Pogiya Aravor Palli"

Thapatha Palli - (Jivaga Chinthamani - 2630.)

Instances of such prefixes are plenty in inscriptions also. Some of these prefixes may indicate the nature of the activities and the monk in charge of the monastery; in others the donor's name is included. There are also examples of prefixes that refer the palli by the number:

MAADEVI PERUM PALLI - Samanamalai 9th century

KANDARAADITTA PERUM PALLI- Jambai 11th AD

NATTAR PERUM PALLI	- 928 AD
CHOLATUNGAN AALAVANDAN PUGALIDAM (ASYLUM)	
CHITRAMEZHI PERUM PALLI	- Arasang Kalani, Saidapet TK 16th AD
VEERAKERALA PERUM PALLI	- Salukkai 1020 AD
NARPATHENNAYIRAP PERUM PALLI	
MELAIPALLI, KEEZHAIPALLI	- Thirunarung Kondai 11th AD
AIYNURTTRUVA PERUMPALLI	- Kayampatti, Thiruvenayal 753 AD
KURANDI THIRUKATTAMPALLI	- 8th cent. 10th AD
KATTAMPALLI	- Sithamoor 10th Cent

Jaina samgha is a four-pillard structure; monk, nun, male and female lay votaries - Yati, aryaga, Sravaka and Sravaki; Thuraviyar and Illara Nonbigal: Ulaga Nonbigal - Savakar (Cilappathikaram). The Jaina church had organised itself into several monastic orders that crystalised into Samghas - Ganas - Gachchas. In the monasteries there will be a hierarchy of monks and are introduced by mentioning the sangas, Gana and Gachchas all over India.

This widely prevalent practice in other parts of the South India is conspicuous by its absence in Tamilnadu. Darsanasara, a prakrit work written by Devasena, mentions that Vajranandi, the pupil of Pujyapatha, founded the Dravida Sangha in Mathura in Vikrama Era 525 i.e. 468-69 A.D. This sangha was a famous one and referred to in Kannada inscription from Karnataka. Scholars are of the opinion that it is likely that the Sangha though a Jaina monastic institution, acted also as an assembly for the cultivation of Tamil language and literature".

"Jaina monastic institution in Tamil Country is unique in that there were lady teachers: referred to Kurathiyar - Kurathi adigal. They took leading part in social and religious activities. When we study the epigraphs of the Tamilnadu we come across for the first time, a large number of women who were not merely the lay followers of the faith or even solitary recluses and nuns, but also played the role of teachers and preceptors guiding the religious activities of the creed".[4]

Caves and caverns with stone beds got embellished, as it were with `darsana bimbas' and gradually formed the institutions for both religious and social education. These sacred places attracted all section of the people and pupils. They were attracted and impressed by the piety, erudition and sterling character of the Jaina monks.

Jaina hermitages have become veritable centres of theological and regular education. With the increase in number of novices to the monastic orders and lay public, the number of hermitages increased and spread to all parts of the Tamil Nadu.

Jaina monasteries, both extant and extinct can be noted in three epicenters 1. Madurai region. 2. Pudukottai region 3. Thondaimandalam. Most of the ancient Jaina monasteries sprang up during the Pallava and Pandya rule and a few during Chola rule.

Madurai Region

Jaina inscriptions from the Madurai region reveal that there flourished in this area a renowned monastery, viz., Kurandi Tirukkattampalli. This palli formed the pivot and around it flourished various centres of Jaina monastery. The exact location of this extinct Jaina monastery is not traceable. But the

inscriptions of this centre were noticed from the front mandapa of the Siva temple at Pallimadam. There are inscriptions at Samanamalai, Uthamapalayam, Thiruparankundram, Kalugumalai and as distant place as Cholavandipuram near Tirukoilur and Thirunaru kondai.

Kurandi Tirukkattampalli should have functioned as a higher centre of learning and the monks and nuns initiated from here went to different centres to spread the religion of Ahimsa.

Astopavasi Bhattarar and his pupil Arishtanemi, figure in the records from Uttamapalayam as well as in Muttupatti. Lithic records from Samanamalai indicate the names of some more alumini of Kurandi like MAHANANDI and GUNASENA DEVA the latter was the head of the Maadevi Perumpalli". There are number of inscriptions in Kalugumalai that reveal the names of preceptors, both male and female from Kurandi palli as well as from other monasteries of TamilNadu. THIRTHABHADARAR, THORIBHA-DARAR, GUNAKEERTHI and HARACHANDRADEVA were from Kurandi.

If Kurandi was a seat of university, Kalugumalai formed "Rainy season retreat institute." In addition to the Astopavasi, the name of one more preceptor Ajjanandi frequent the inscriptions of the Madurai region. Ajjanandi, the revivalist, was responsible for carving of the sculptures on rocks and hills at Vallimalai, Anaimalai. Aivarmalai, Alagar Malai, Tirucharanar Malai and Eruvadi.

Thiruthakkadevar, in his *magnum opus Jeevaga chinthanmani* venerates one Acchanandi Adigal as the preceptor of his hero-Jeevagan a Prince. Obviously, Acchanandi Adigal is the same as Ajjanandi frequently referred to in the inscriptions.

Pudukottai Region

In Pudukottai area, there are a number of hills, hillocks and caverns that served as seats of Jaina learning and austerities. We have Sittannavasal with proven Karnataka contact; Narattamalai, Bommamalai and Melamalai form centres of Jaina Monastic activities.

An inscription form Aluruttimalai mentions the names of two Jaina monks belonging to the monastery in the hill called "Tiruppallimalai". They are Dharmadeva Acharya and his preceptor Kanakachandra Pandita. Suffix Pandita is significant.

Tondaimandalam

In Tondaimandalam, there were a large number of pallis. Of these, those at Tirupathripuliyur, Thiruparuthikundram, Thirunarunkondai, Thayanur and Sithamoor have played important role in the spread of Ahimsa faith.

Thiruppathripuliyur

Patalika in Banarastra was an important seat of Jaina monastic activities. Jaina tradition relates this centre presently to Cuddalore. Acharya Kundakunda - Elacharya, it is believed, founded the Dravida Sangha here in the Ist cent. B.C. Literary evidence of 5th cent. A.D and narrative of *Periapuranam* point to the existence of a Jaina monastic centre at this place. The Digambara work in Sanskrit *`Lokavibhaga'*, states that the prakrit original of this work was completed by Muni Sarvanandi in (Saka-380) - 458 A.D at Patalika. It is surrounded by many Jain temples and Jaina families in nearby villages. In the Cuddalore city there is a Jain temple renovated recently that echo the Jaina tradition.

Thirupparuthikkundram

Tirupparuthikkundram is popularly known as Jinakanchi. The temple and the monastery of this centre is known from 6th cent. A.D. The Pallankoil copper plates mention one Vajaranandi as the preceptor in-charge of this monastery. The inscriptions from here datable to 12th to 16th cent. A.D. furnish more information about the Vardhamana temple and the pontiffs of the monastery.

Jinakanchi is hallowed with the names of Holy Acharyas MALLISENA and PUSPASENA who administered the monastery. Their memory is celebrated in the form of votives under a Kura tree. There are separate cells within the compound of the temple labelled as Munivasam, the monastery.

Mallisena Vamana was the author of the Tamil work *Merumandra Puranam* and he is believed to have written a commentry to *Neelakesi.* The Trailokianatha temple and the ceiling paintings are extant. Presently, the Archaeology Department of Govt. of Tamil Nadu execute large scale renovation of the temple.

Thirumalai

Thirumalai, a hill replete with Jaina antiquities, was a seat of Jaina monastery. This centre had more of patronage from Karnataka region. The earliest epigraph of this centre belongs to Chola King Parantaka I assignable to 910 A.D.

Monk Gunavira was associated with the monastery and he undertook the task of constructing a sluice for irrigation of the lands of this village. In the inscriptions the hill is referred to as '*Arahanda Sugiri*' in Sanskrit and as '*Enguna Iraivan Kundru.*" in Tamil.

The main temple here is dedicated to the 22nd Thirthankara Neminatha. A 16' high Sihamaninathar statue is carved on the hill top. In the caves, there are fresco-paintings. The ancient monastery is revived recently with the help of the Sravanabelgola Jaina Matha. The palli monastic tradition had given place to the Bhattarah tradition. Presently the monastery, (matha) is called Arahandagiri Jain Math presided over by Swasthi Sri Dhavalakirti Adigal. He hails from Uppuvelur near Tindivanam, and he had monastic training at Sravana Belgola.

Thirunarungondai

Tirunarungondai, near Ulundurpet is an ancient Jaina centre. It was the birth place of VEERA SANGA. We have epigraphic records from 9th cent. A.D. Preceptor Gunabadra was the driving force of this centre. There are caves and stone beds and two temples referred to as Melai palli and Kilaipalli. The presiding deity Parsvanatha Thirthankara is called Appandainathar. This centre flourished upto 12th cent. A.D. There are inscriptions at Kalugumalai and Thirucharanam that mention names of the monks from this centre.

Presently, this centre continues as an important prathana centre with the ancient Jaina temples on the hill. Recently this Jaina hill was claimed by the local Hindus. With government intervention it was restored to the Jainas. To revive this centre, the Tamil Jains have stared a movement" Narkaatchi" and congregate every year at the centre with religious and literary activities. Literary compositions such as *Appandainathar Ula* and *Tirumetrisai Anthati* extol the glory of Appandainatha and praise the religous activities connected with this place.

There is a local tradition comparing this centre with Chidambaram in the form of a proverbial saying, "*Thillai Moovayiram Thirunarungkondai Ennayiram*".

Sithamoor

The Jaina monastery in Sithamoor, near Gingee, in Villupuram district, is a prolific ancient Jaina centre. This monastery was called as THIRUVOORAM PALLI or KATTAMPALLI. These names appear in the inscriptions datable to 888 A.D. and 1173 A.D.

`Singapuranattu Sittramoor' referred to in the inscription of the village, (presently this Jain centre is called melsithamoor) was an important one and now, it is the headquarters of the Digambara Sect in Tamilnadu with a monstery headed by a Pontiff. Ancient palli tradition has given place to modern Bhattara tradition. We have continuous dated history but for the integrrnum of a two centuries. Sithamoor monastery is named "JINA KANCHI" math - after the one at Thiruparuthi Kundram. The inscriptions at Sithamoor datable from 9th century to 12th century indicate the existence of Palli tradition. In the 15th century it was transferred as a Chaturvedimangalam and given to Brahmanas.

Jainism and the Jainas were subjected to oppression and persecution during 15th cent. A.D. There was a local tradition that relate to the beheading of the Jainas. "*sumandham Thalai Pattu*" ie., The head of the one who carries is the 10th one" to be cut. Nine Jainas heads will be cut and the 10th Jaina carry them on his head and he will also be beheaded. Fear of the persecution drove the Jainas away to different areas. One of the leaders went to Udayarpalayam near Tiruchy and took shelter with the local chieftain. One of the survivors of the persecution went to

Sravanabelgola in Karnataka and learned Jaina scriptures, became a saint with his initiated name Virasenacharya and returned to the Sithamoor area.

One Gangeya udayar of the near by Thazhanoor village helped the saint VEERASENA ACHARYA to re-establish Jaina centre in Sithamoor. The people in the nearby village - Peramundur, helped to establish a Jaina math. They were working in their fields putting the manure to their lands. The appeal from Veerasanacharya, prompted them to drop the baskets from their head and proceeded to Sithamoor. This oral tradition is depicted in the wall painting of the sanctum of one of the temples, the Chandranatha temple locally called the `Peria Kovil' at Perumandur.

Col. Mackenizie manuscript is the only dated source of the Jaina math.[5] He had interviewed in 1816 A.D. the then Pontiff Munibadradeva Acharya and collected information about the Jainas, Jainism, expense of math, festivals and the books in the library.

Next dated record is an inscription of 1865 A.D. which reveals the name : Abinava Adisena Bhattara, as the Pontiff, the Madathipathi. It was this Bhattara who expanded the present Pasvanatha temple and added a gopura with the contributions of the Jaina public. Though there is no dated records that show the succession of the madathipathis, people remember them by their purvashrama names. Thus, we have a list of Pontiffs referred to as Chinna Kulandaiswamy, Vimalanathaswamy, Appavusamy and others. Appavusamy is the one who constructed a modern monastery building, in 1915. Pontiffs are addressed as "Swasthi Sri Lakshmi Sena Bhattaraha Bhatta Charyavarya Swamigal. It shows that the Bhattara tradition was initiated by the Sena gana Jaina monks.

The Pontiff wears saffron two-piece cloth and a turban also saffron in colour. He wears wooden sandals and is honoured with a parasol. In continuation of palli tradition in which Nirgrantha monk headed the pallis, the Bhattaras do not wear under garment and take nirvana diksha at the time of death. They are cremated in sitting posture on the rocks.

Pontiffs are appointed by the Jaina Society from among the learned persons well versed in religious literature and of sterling character. Most of the Pontiffs were from the nearby villages, Veeranamoor and Agaloor. Generally when the Pontiff feels his end, he appoints another person to succeed him.

Appointment and charge handing over ceremony is referred to as *Pattaabishekam* - Coronation. Pontiffs carry as their insignia a *Pinja* (peacock feather) *Kamandala* (Water Pot) rosary of beads - *Jabamalai*. Symbolically, the *Pinja* is handed over to new Pontiff. When the Bhattara system came into vogue, there was a chain of four mathas connected in a consortium all the four having the same title i.e. Lakshmi Sena Bhattara. The four centres are referred to Chatur - Simasanatheswaras - i.e. Delhi - Kolhapura (Maharastra) - Jinakanchi (Tamilnadu) Penukonda (Andhra Pradesh). If there happens the sudden demise of a Pontiff in one of the centres, then Madathipathis of other centres come to appoint a new pontiff. Such an occasion arose in Sithamoor during 1958. The chief of Kolhapur math (was also a Tamilian from the Village of Mudaloor in Tiruvannamalai Dt.) came to appoint a new Pontiff as the incumbent died suddenly. There arose difference of opinion among the section of the society on this appointment and prolonged litigation went upto 1973, and the Pontiff from Narasimharaja-

pura was appointed as receiver and later became the Madathipathi.

Madathipathi has religious as well as social duties. He is to initiate both boys and girls into religious life by the ceremony called upadesa (some what equal to sacred thread wearing ceremony); looks after the construction of new temples, their consecration; maintenance of the temples (Sarva Jinalaya Paripalaka), conduct of annual festivals - *Brahmotsava* at Sithamoor; a car festival - (the only Jain centre to celebrate car festival on the Lord Mahavir Jayanthi Day); maintenance of landed property and increasing the revenue of the Math. Previously each and every Jaina family in Tamilnadu contributed an annual tax - *Aduppuvari* - Stove tax - to the Matha; also during the marriages - a tax *Homavari* - was paid. Whenever there was a famine, the Matha lent paddy seed as well as cash as loan for nominal interest. Previously the math received land grants that fetched an annual income of 4000 varahan. Col. Mackenzie manuscript informs that the income was reduced to 100 varahan during Nawab's period due to Brahmana officers under them. This had come down to 60 varahans in British rule.

Presently only a very meagre income accures from lands owned by the math. Thereby the various religious and social activities cannot be satisfactorily carried out.

Once they assume the Pontifficial seat, they renounce their family connection. Even during the cremation, the pyre is lighted by the archaka of the math and not by the family member. They also take the vow of *Sallekhana* - fast unto death - at their last days when death is imminent. It is remiscent of the Palli tradition of the Jaina Monasteries of the ancient days.

Lady Preceptors

"Jaina church in Tamilnadu is unique in that there existed prosperous institution of lady preceptors. They had a wide circle of lady disciples. Lady Teachers are addressed as Kurattiyar - Kuratti Adigal and are of a unique class by themselves.[6]

The Tamil lexicon work - Chudamani Nigandu gives a list of epithets that refer to Jaina Nuns as KANTI - AVVAI - AMMAI - KANNI - KAVUNTHY. The lady preceptor is called Kuratti. We have reference to Kavunti Adigal in *Cilappathikaram*, one of the five major Tamil Kavyas. There is a oral tradition that affirms the role played by Kanti - Kantiyar in educating the lay lady disciples. They were well versed in Tamil language. *Jeevaga Cinthamani* - a major Tamil Kavya - was composed by the Acharya Thiruthakha Devar. It contains 3143 stanzas. It is believed that a few hundred stanzas were the work of these Kantiyar (interpolated) and can not be distinguished from the original work of the author.

At Kurandi Thirukkattampalli, there existed a nunnery and the inmates were called **`Kurandi Kannimar'** - nuns of Kurandi.[7]

Vedal, a village near Vandavasi in Tiruvannamalai district is noted for the **Vidarpalli** - that existed there in 8th and 9th centuries. A.D. There are four inscriptions that belong to the time of Pallava - Nandivarman II and Chola Aditya I. The caverns here were extended with a mandapa and converted into a big nunnery. This was a separate hermitage for lady teachers and disciples. It was called `VIDAR PEN PALLI' - Palli of female students.

Lady preceptor KANAGAVIRA KURATTIYAR resided here. She was the pupil of Gunakirti Bhatarar

of Vidal. Vidal was also known as Madevi Arandimangalam. In this hermitage there lived 900 hundred nuns! This information is gleaned from the inscription of the chola ruler Aditya I assigned to the second half of 9th cent. A.D.

Vilappakkam, a village near Arcot, has a distinction of hosting a Jaina Nunnery in the reign of Chola King Paranthaka I. An epigraph dated 945A.D. reveals the sinking of a well at Vilappakkam by **Pattini Kurati Adigal.** This well and a house were afterwards constituted into a nunnery. She was a disciple of Aristanemi Bhatarar of Thiruppanmalai.

An inscribed slab with the image of a nun is found at Olakkur near Tindivanam of Villupuram district. The inscription is of the 8th cent. characters. It reveals the name of the nun as PRIDIVI-VIDANGA KURATTI. She is flanked by a lamp and canopied by an umbrella. She should have been held in high esteem and therefore the king himself had caused to be made her image.

Kalugumalai hill, in the village of the same name near Kovilpatti, with a hundred of Jina images - is "the imperishable gallery of art" and "stands as a unique monument of Jaina culture in South India. There are also a number of inscriptions associated with these sculptures. They are label inscriptions and reveal the name of the person or persons who were responsible for the particular images to be carved on the rock. The donors were the Adroit preceptors, male and female, lay followers: men and women, of agricultural and mercantile communities.[8]

Interestingly, names of many lady preceptors also occur in these epigraphs. They all hailed from different places in Tamilnadu. In the records mention is made

of the places to which they belonged and also their disciples.

Some of these names are presented here to show how the institution of Nuns along with monks flourished well in Tamilnadu.

a) SANGA KURATTIGAL; Leader of Jain Sanga, her disciple Srivijaya Kurattiyar.

b) TIRUPARUTTI KURATTI; hailed from Tirupparuttikundram near Kanchipuram. She was a disciple of Pattini Bhatara.

c) THIRUMALAI KURATTI; hailed from Thirumalai. She had a male disciple: Enadikuttanan.

d) THIRUCHARANATTU KURATTIGAL came from Thirucharanam near Nagerkoil.

Brief mention of the names of the Jaina nuns, nunnery and their disciples prove the Jaina contribution to women's education and equal opportunity for religious role.

Jaina monasteries and the attached Jain temples were great cultural centres. The isolated and remote abodes of the Jaina Monks developed into Pallis with the help of Pallichandams. These Pallis of ancient Tamilnadu have metamorphosed as Jaina maths in the Bhattara tradition. There are only two such mathas now, JINA KANCHI JAIN MATHA (Villupuram Dt). and ARAGANDAGIRI JAIN MATHA (Thiruvannamalai Dt).

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JAINA EPIGRAPHS

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The epigraphical wealth in Tamilnadu is undoubtedly higher than any other part of Indian subcontinent. They are generally ranging from 5th or 4th century B.C. to 18th century A.D., which provide valuable information on the history of Tamilnadu in particular and social, religious and economic history of this region in general. The earliest lithic records in this region are mostly of Jaina persuasion. These stone epigraphs are found on the beds and brows of the natural caverns, which once functioned as the abodes of Jaina monks in the pre-Christian era. Nearly five hundred and eighty five inscriptions pertaining to Jaina religion discovered all over Tamilnadu shed valuable light on the history of Jainism.[1] The following table shows the distribution of Jaina inscriptions in Tamil country with a chronological order.

Districts	500 B.C. - 500 A.D.	501 - 900 A.D.	901-1400 A.D.	1401-1800 A.D.	Total
Coimbatore	–	–	–	1	1
Cuddalore	–	32	7	5	44
Dharmapuri	–	5	2	1	8

Dindukal	9	15	3	2	29
Erode	6	–	9	3	18
Kanchipuram	–	5	22	20	26
Kanyakumari	–	7	3	12	22
Karur	11	–	–	–	11
Chennai	–	1	5	1	7
Madurai	50	39	5	2	96
Pudukkottai	7	20	8	–	35
Ramnad	–	–	–	2	2
T.V. Malai	1	13	48	18	80
Thanjavur	–	2	4	–	6
Tirunelveli	3	99	4	2	106
Sivaganga	3	–	–	–	3
Tiruvallur	–	2	3	–	5
Trichy	3	3	3	–	9
Vellore	–	7	9	1	17
Villupuram	6	12	22	19	59

Many Scholars have ascribed the early migration of Jainism in Tamilnadu approximately to the end of 3rd century B.C. or to the beginning of 2nd century B.C.[2] This theory is fully based on the migration of Chandragupta Maurya along with the Jain Monk Bhadrabahu and twelve thousand disciples to Sravanabelagola in Karnataka around 3rd century B.C. Scholars, who further examined this late legendary source refused to consider its authenticity and inclined to believe that Jainism might have been in existence in South India even before the arrival of Bhadrabahu and Chandragupta Maurya.

Antiquity of Jainism in Tamilnadu.

The earliest lithic records i.e., the Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions numbering around one hundred found nearly in 30 sites in Tamilnadu shed valuable light on the advent of Jainism in this region around 5th or 4th century B.C. However, Shri I. Mahadevan in his recent magnum opus book entitled "Early Tamil Epigraphy from the earliest times to 6th century A.D.". fixes the date of these early inscriptions to 2nd century B.C. and traces the advent of Jainism in Tamil country through Karnataka which is based on the Bhadrabahu and Chandragupta Maurya legend and these monks were responsible for the introduction of the Tamil-Brahmi script in Tamilnadu.[3] Further, inorder to strengthen his theory of Karnataka origin, he has read some of the inscriptions with old Kannada influence.[4] For instance, he quoted the famous Sittannavasal, Tirupparankunram, Edakal and Nekanurpatti inscriptions. The word Eruminadu, a territorial division mentioned in Sittannavasal inscription, could have been a locality within Pudukkottai region and not in Mysore, i.e., Mahisha Mandala, as referred to by I. Mahadevan. The next word Kavuti in the same inscription has been equvated with gauda or gavinda is a farfetched one.

Kaviti is a title, which appears in the late inscription too in Tamilnadu and the caste name Gauda, is the derivation of Kamindan.[5] The word first appears in Kannada inscription around 8th century A.D. and frequently figures in the inscriptions of Kongu region as the caste title of Kongu Vellalas (agricultural group of people) and later on it became Gauda in Karnataka. According to I. Mahadevan the word sirupovil also has kannada influence and he has taken this word as posulu or hosulu, a kannada term. This

is actually sirupovil, a Tamil word, later on became Siruvayil the place name. There is a slight difference between ca and va in this inscription.

The word tayiyaru (mother) in Neganurpatti inscription is a colloquial form of Tamil speaking people.[6] This is not a loan word from Kannada. It is to be remembered here that many Hero stone inscriptions of Chengam and Dharmapuri regions contain Tamil words very often ending with 'u '; such as ariasaru, pattaru, Sevagaru, etc.[7]

Above all, if the Jaina ascetics had migrated from Sravanabelagola in Karnataka, the earliest Brahmi inscriptions of Jainism should have been engraved in Sravanabelagola itself or in the vicinity of it in Karnataka. In order to propagate their religion, the Jaina adherents should have engraved their writings as we find in Tamilnadu. But no single Brahmi inscription of Jaina influence sofar has been discovered in this region and the earliest inscription at Sravanabelagola starts only from sixth century A.D.

The paleographic and orthographic features of early Tamil-Brahmi script do not suit the well-developed Asokan Brahmi of 3rd century B.C. The varga system, conjunct consonants and the well-developed form of letters are the main feature of Asokan Brahmi.[8] But these are absent in Tamil Brahmi and one can see the primitive form of Tamil words in most of the early Tamil Brahmi inscriptions; for example the famous Mangulam inscriptions. Thus these inscriptions can be dated to pre Asokan period, i.e., 5th or 4th century B.C.

The famous Jambai inscription is well akin to Asokan Brahmi both in paleography as well as the standardization of letters: Thus, it could be assigned to 3rd century B.C. i.e. contemporary to Asoka.[9] The

Sangam literature mentions the three kings of Adiyaman lineage. They were Nedumidal, Neduman Anji, and Pokutelini.[10] If we assign the Jambai inscription to the 1st century A.D., then we have to fix the date to the first king to 50 B.C. and Anji to 1.A.D. and the third king to 50.A.D. The Adiyamans of Sangam literature as well as of the Jambai inscription are the same as Satyaputras referred to in the Asokan edits. In that case, they were contemporary to the Mauryan king Asoka. Hence, the date of Jambai inscription should be pushed back to 3rd century B.C. on paleographical grounds as well as the usage of the term Satyaputo in the Jambai inscription as well as in the Asokan inscription.

From the above, it is clear that the advent of Jainism in the Tamil country probably took place around 5th or 4th century B.C. The Buddhist literature Mahavamsa states that Jainism was prevalent in the island of Ceylon as early as 4th century B.C. In the same work, the influence of Nirgranthas is very much attested to in both the regions. Since Madurai was a flourishing center of many religions as well as academic activities, it functioned as a great center of Jainism also. The Jaina ascetics settled in and around Madurai region, which is surrounded by many hills with natural caverns suitable to lead a peaceful and comfortable life for the monks and to preach Jainism. As rightly pointed out by P.B. Desai that Jainism traveled all the way from North India by land route through Tamilnadu to Ceylon anterior to the 4th century B.C.[11] Besides, Tamil Brahmi script and the Srilanka-Brahmi script and their paleography are very similar to each other, which show the contacts of both the countries in the early period.

Jainism in the early period in Tamilnadu received patronage from the kings and the public. From the

Tamil Brahmi inscriptions, it is known that the Jaina monks who stayed in the natural caverns were gifted beds and pallis by the kings, chieftains, traders, guilds and women. These centers were continuously occupied by many Jaina ascetics, which are attested to by the later inscriptions of the places.

A number of Jaina centers in Tamilnadu flourished for about 1500 years, though a declining phase started around 6th century A.D. due to Bakthi movement. However, the Jaina religion received its support from the Pallavas and Pandyas. During this period, we could witness several Vatteluttu inscriptions along with the bas-relief sculptures of Jaina affiliation in the early caves of Pandya region. This religion continuously maintained its status during the Cholas, later Pandyas and the Vijayanagara Kings.

Jaina Inscriptions from 6th century A.D. to 18th Century A.D.

As mentioned above, the Pallavas, Pandyas Cholas and the Vijayanagara kings supported Jainism in this region for a long time. Nearly 450 inscriptions of these dynasties scattering all over Tamilnadu focus various aspects of this religion. During this period, Jaina adherents of Karnataka and Tamilnadu maintained cordial relations with each other.

Jaina monastic order in Tamil Country

In the early medieval period, Tamilnadu witnessed tremendous growth of Jaina religion in the form of installation of images, construction and renovation of many pallis and the hectic activities of many Jaina ascetics. It is significant to note here that some of the inscriptions in Tamilnadu disclose the monastic orders of Jainism, which were commonly seen

in the neighboring states i.e., Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The inscriptions refer to the term samgha, gana etc., to denote the monastic orders of Jainism. The gana is a division of samgha sometime referred to in the inscriptions as samgha itself. In Tamilnadu, we come across three monastic orders such as Mula samgha, Dravida samgha and Yapaniya samgha in the epigraphs.

Mula samgha

The most predominant monastic order of the Jainas in SouthIndia figures in a few inscriptions of Tamilnadu. An inscription from Adiyamankottai in Dharmapuri district refers to an endowment of land for the construction of a Jaina temple at Mayindiramangalam by certain Jainottama Somanna, a disciple of Madava Chandra Bhattaraka of Mula samgha. He was the son of Udaiyanna Pekkadi of Kasyapa-gotra and grandson of Viprakula, belonging to Tanyam, a chaturvedimangalam in the Sela nadu. This inscription is paleographically dated to 12th century A.D. The teacher mentioned in the inscription was attached with the Mulasamgha.[12]

Another inscription from Kilaikuilkudi in Kannada language and script mentions the names of Jaina teachers Aryadeva and Balachandra deva, belonging to Mulasamgha.[13] On paleographical grounds, this inscription is also datable to 12th century A.D. These two teachers originally hailed from Sravanabelagola and visited the Madurai area inorder to propagate the Jaina principles. It is also significant to note that this Mulasamgha is frequently mentioned in the inscriptions of Sravanabelagola datable to 14-15th centuries. However, it is believed that this monastic order existed as early as the 8th or 9th century in South India.

A Jaina image displayed at the Government Museum, Egmore, has an inscription on the base, mentioning its name as Santinatha deva of the temple Yeraga-Jinalaya founded by the Mahapradhana Brahadevana, a disciple of Sakalabhadra Bhattaraka, the Mahamandalacharya of the Mulasamgha, Kundakundanvaya, Kanur gana and Tintrini-gachcha.[14] The above three names are the sub-divisions of Mulasamgha, of which the Kundakundanvaya is the most important and oldest sect founded by a Digambara scholar Kundakunda. Since this inscription is in Kannada language and script, the image might have been brought from elsewhere in Karnataka region. Though the references of the Mulasamgha found in all the above places, the nature of the inscriptions and the language and script give the clue that the Mulasamgha was not much influential in Tamil country.

Dramila samgha

An interesting inscription at Siyamangalam of 10th century A.D. refers to the Dramila samgha along with Nandhi samgha.[15] This inscription is written in poetic form in Grantha characters. It contains exaltation of Arungal-anvaya and a Jaina monk VajjraNandhi Yogindrar who was the mandalacharya of the Nandhi samgha of Dramila samgha. He constructed the flight steps to the Jaina temple at Siyamangalam. From this it is evident that the Nandi samgha was probably a division (gana) of Dramila samgha. This division was also attached with Mulasamhha. The Dramila samgha mentioned in our inscription is variously referred to in the inscriptions of Karnataka and Andhra as Dravila samgha, Dramila samgha. It is evident from a Jaina work Darsanasara that this samgha was founded by Vajranandhi of Madurai in Tamil Nadu in the first quarter of 9th century A.D.

Yapaniya samgha

A 9th century inscription at Kirappakkam in Kanchipuram district records the construction of Desavallabha Jinalaya to the north of Kiraippakkam by Amaramudalguru, the disciple of Mahaviraguru of the Yapaniya samgha and Kumili gana.[16] The inscription further states that provision was made for feeding the monks of the samgha who stayed in the Jinalaya. This samgha is also an important monastic order of medieval South India.

In the inscriptions of Tamilnadu, there are some scanty references to the divisions of the monastic order such as Virasamgha, Kumili gana and Nandisamgha or gana. Virasamgha figures in the inscription at Vijayamangalam in Erode district, Aiyampalayam in Dindukkal district and Tirunarunkondai in Vilupuram district.[17] An inscription from Tirunarunkondai refers to one Gunabhadracharya who was also called Virasangha pradishtacharya. It shows that he founded the Virasamgha at this place.[18] The earliest reference of Nandi samgha is mentioned in the Pallankovil copper plate of Simhavarman of 6th century A.D. It refers to the Jaina ascetic Vajranandi who was well versed in sacred literature belonging to Nandi samgha of Vardhamanesvara tirtha.[19]

It is evident from this that the Nandi samgha was the earliest monastic form that prevailed in Tamilnadu as early as 6th century A.D. Probably, it might have been attached with the Mulasamgha. Besides, quite a number of Jaina monks' names were suffixed with Nandhi and it gives the clue that these ascetics were probably attached with the Nandi samgha; for instance Ajjanandi, Vajranandi, Pushpanandi Srinandi, Chandranandi etc.

Jaina pallis

The epigraphs belonging to different periods furnish valuable data about the existence and active functions of many Jaina pallis all over Tamilnadu. They reveal that Jainism had received all sorts of support from the royal kings and the lay followers. An inscription from Anandamangalam refers to the existence of a palli namely Jinagiripalli during the time of Parantaka Chola in 942 A.D.[20] Tirupparuttikunram at JinaKanchi enjoyed the royal support of many Pallava Kings; the Pallankovil Copper plates attests to it.[21] An inscription from Kanchi Kamakshi Amman temple furnishes an interesting information. This inscription states that the Pallava queen Lokamahadevi was afflicted by a brahmarakshasa (evil spirit) and a Jaina acharya of the Ajivikadarsana attached with the Mahilampalli cured the disease of the Queen.[22]

The kings, queens, chieftains and the mercantile guilds and the agricultural guilds founded many Jaina pallis, which were all named after them. The following pallis existed in Tamil country between 7th and 18th century A.D. Chitramelipperumpalli at Arasankalani, Sirukaranapperumpalli at Sirupakkam near Chengleput.[23] Nikarakara Perumpalli at Perunkulam in Srivaikundam taluk.[24] Parisva Jinalaya at Sevidapadi in Hosur taluk[25]; and Perumpalli at Iruppaikkudi in Sattur taluk.[26]

Kurandi Tirukkattampalli in Aruppukkottai taluk was an important monastery during medieval times.[27] Many Jaina monks attached with this palli visited quite a number of Jaina centers in Tamilnadu and donated a number of gifts to these pallis. Kundavai jinalaya at Tirumalai in Polur Taluk in Thiruvanna malai District and at Dadapuram in Tindivanam taluk,

Villupuram district Gangasurapperumpalli and Maisuttapperumpalli at Rajakesaripuram (Tirakkol, Wandavasi taluk) are some of those temples referred to in lithic records.[28] It is evident that the village Tirunarunkondai had two Jaina pallis during the time of the Cholas. They were known as Melaipalli and Kilaippalli.[29] Besides these, there were other pallis like Nattarperumpalli at Valaiyur[30] near Tirukkoyilur, Gandaradhitya perumpalli.[31] Sundara chola perumpalli, Perunarkilliperumpalli[32], Ainnurruvapperumpalli[33], Niyayaparipala perumpalli at Singakulam, Chitrlekahip-perumpalli at Avanrani[34], Kavirajapperum palli[35]. Amudamolipperumpalli[36]. Miladudaiyar Perumpalli at Nagesvaram[37] etc., in the Chola country.

Nuns and Nunneries

It is also interesting to note that the inscriptions of Tamilnadu give valuable information about Jaina Nuns attached with Jaina pallis and their active participation in religious matters. They are recorded as kurattigal in Tamil. The Neganurpatti inscription reveals the fact that the mother and a daughter from a village Perumpogayi gave shelter to Jaina monks. This inscription belongs to 3rd century A.D[38]. The famous Vẹdal inscription of Chola king Aditya dated in 885 A.D. records some dispute between female ascetics and their disciples. It mentions Kanakavirakurattiyar a disciple of Gunakirti bhatara of Vidal alias Madevi-Arandimangalam. This Jaina palli was a nunnery having 500 lady pupils under the above kurattiyar. The local inhabitants amicably settled the dispute.[39]

Vilapakkam near Arcot also had a nunnery in the 10th century A.D. An inscription of Parantaka Chola dated in 945 A.D. at Vilappakkam refers to the digging

of a well by one Pattini kurttigal, female disciple of Arishtanemi pidarar of Tiruppanmalai[40]. The Jaina center at Kalugumalai also represented more female disciples who caused to be made many sculptures of Jaina Thirthankaras on the hill[41]. An inscription from Chitaral dated in 9th century A.D. records the gift of gold to the deity Bhatariyar by Gunatanki kurattigal a disciple of Arishtanemi bhattara of Periyakudi[41a].

Nisidhigai Epigraphs

A few inscriptions from Tamilnadu reveal an interesting aspect of Jainism known as sallekhana. An inscription from Tirunatharkunru dated to the 4th century A.D. refers to the death of a Jaina teacher Chandranandhi after observing fifty-seven days of fasting[42]. Another inscription in the same place records the death of a monk Ilayapadrara who fasted for thirty days. This inscription is dated to 9th century A.D.[43] Both the inscriptions were engraved on the rock surface of the hill. This shows that this place was famous for the sallekhana practice where the monks undertook deep meditation in the open place and fasted unto death. Paraiyanpattu, a village near Gingee, has an inscription mentioning the death of certain Aradan who observed vrta and liberated his soul. This epigraph belongs to 5th century A.D. A late inscription from Vijayamangalam refers to a nun who observed sallekhana and for her memory a mandapa was erected in the Chandranatha temple in the village[44]

The foregoing epigraphical survey reveals that Jainism gained entry into Tamilnadu as early as the 5th or 4th century B.C and continued to hold good till about the 18th century. It reached its zenith under the patronage of the Chola monarchs around 9th century A.D. During this time Tamilnadu witnessed the

emergence of a number of Jaina pallis and the Kings gave liberal land donations as pallichandam for the growth of Jainism.

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RECENTLY DISCOVERED JAINA INSCRIPTIONS

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Jaina inscriptions of Tamilnadu which belong to several centuries have been studied extensively by various scholars from different angles. Of these studies, the recent publication entitled, Early Tamil Epigraphy: from the Earliest Times to Sixth Century AD[1], a study on early Tamil Brahmi and Vatteluttu inscriptions mostly from rock-shelters and caves, by Iravatham Mahadevan, is a magnum opus. This voluminous work deals with various aspects like discovery of the records, their decipherment, palaeography, orthography, language, grammar and socio-religious matters as gleaned from the early Tamil inscriptions.The author's multi-disciplinary approach to the study of the early inscriptions of Tamilnadu proves beyond doubt that these lithic records are of Jaina affilication as against the earlier views of some scholars who had attributed them to the Buddhist sect.[2] Evidently, Jainism wielded considerable influence over the Tamil society from

about the 3rd century B.C. down to the 6th century A.D.

Epigraphical discoveries are being made regularly by the assiduous Archaeologists and they have been reported in different Journals and magazines which are at times not easily accessible to all. In view of this difficulty, Jaina inscriptions discovered for the last ten years are presented here in this paper. Most of them have been reported in AVANAM, the Journal of Tamilnadu Archaeological Society, and the present author whole-heartedly acknowledeges the yeomen service of those who have brought to light these invaluable lithic documents.

Arittapatti

Arittapatti, a village in Melur taluk of Madurai district, contains a small hillock locally known as Kalinjamalai. It was from a cavern in the hillock an early brahmi inscription datable to the 2nd century B.C. was brought to light in the year 1971.[3]

Recently, another early brahmi inscription of the same age has been discovered by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu. It discloses that the hermitage (cave) was caused to the made by Imayavan, son of Ilam Peratan of Ilanchi.[4] The place Ilanchi is identified with the modern Ilanchi near Kurralam in Tirunelveli district. The hermitage is referred to here by the term Mulaukai, as against to the oft-repeated term Palli or Paali. In addition to this inscription, the one discovered from here in 1971, and another from Varichchiyur near Madurai also mention Mulakai and Mulaukai respectively referring to hermitage. The script of this new inscription (Fig) has close similarities with the Tamil Brahmi inscriptions found at Mangulam (near Arittapatti) and

Kongarpuliyankulam (near Chekkanurani, Tirumangalam Taluk, Madurai district) of Pandya region. The Sangam literature Ahananuru (168:12) also mentions the cave by the name mulai, which may be a variant of mulaukai. The personal names in this inscription Emayavan and Elamperatan are typical Tamil names. In Cilappatikaram (Kadaladukathai: line 43) Lord Siva is mentioned as Emayavan. As the very name Emayavan is synonymous with that of Lord Siva, it is not improper to suggest that the donor of the hermitage for the stay of the Jaina monks could have been a devotee of Siva. If so, it shows the liberal attitude of Emayavan towards the Jaina creed.

Tamaraikarai

A fragmentary Tamil Brahmi inscription belonging to 5th-6th cent. A.D is found engraved on a stone kept in the premises of the Virabhadra temple on Erettimalai at Tamaraikarai in Bhavani taluk, Erode district. This stone was erected to commemorate the death (sallekana) of a person named "Karumatha Sattan."[5] Natana Kasinathan reads the name "Karumitha Sattan" and believes that he should have been a Jaina merchant.[6] There is more possibility to read this name as "Karimu(t)tu Sattan". "Kari" might be associated with the Jainism. Because, the Jaina associated inscription at Pulankurichchi[7] has many official names with "kari" as its suffix or prefix (Eg.Kirankari, Karikannan and Nariankari). No doubt, mu(t)tu is pearl and sattan is a merchant. So, he might have been a pearl merchant patronising Jainism.

Kilarasampattu

An inscription of Pallava king Nandivarman dated in his 4th regnal year (850 AD) found on the foot-hill

of the Sarakkumalai at Kilarasampattu, Vellore taluk and district[8] records that Srikalikkuri arasar caused to have made a pali for the sake of Sri Mallan Tukkili, a Jaina monk. Sri Kalikkuri arasar seems to be a local chieftain under the Pallava king Nandivarman III.

Another Pallava inscription is found in the Kusaladum kuhai of the same place cited above. This inscription belongs to the 19th regnal year (888 AD) of the King Nirupatungavarman.[9] This inscription records a 'Srikoyil dedicated to Simhanandi battarar of Periya Pennagadam by Siriya Nangai, the wife of Pangalanadudaiyar. The suffix battarar clearly indicates him a Jaina monk.[10] There is a huge cave on the hillock measuring 40 feet length and 25 feet width. This is the same as the 'Srikoyil' referred to in the epigraph. It is also significant to note here that the donor of the Srikoyil had the honorific title Sulegal, a Kannada term equivalent to the Tamil Devaradiyal of the later usage. It shows the influence of Karnataka in the northern part of Tamilnadu on Jainism and it is a known fact that this region is much influenced by the Jains of Karnataka during this period. Pangalanadudaiyar may be the Chief of the region comprised of the modern Vellore and Gudiattam taluks of Tondaimandalam region. Pangalanadu retains its earlier name even at present and lies near Kaniampadi, situated about 6 km from the find-spot of the inscription. Periya Pennagadam, the native village of Simhanandi may be the same as Pennattur located on the foot hill of the Sarakkumalai.

Mangadu

Another Pallava inscription had also been documented at Mangadu, near Chennai. This stone record belongs to the period of Kampavarman's 5th

regnal year (875 A.D.)[11] and it speaks about the donation of paddy by a female disciple (Manakkiyar) of Ananda Veerak Kuravar, a Jaina monk of the Jaina palli at Mangadu. Manakkiyar (her name is lost in the inscription) was a daughter of Purisaikilar Amar Nilaiyar of Paripandatturai of (Arka)ttukurram. Mangadu was a village in Mangadu-nadu in a sub-division of Puliyurkottam in Tondaimandalam. The existence of a Jaina temple at Mangadu attested to by this inscription, no longer remained until 13th century AD. The temple became probably ruined and the stones were used for the construction of Kamakshi Amman temple in this village. An inscription of Sundara Pandya dated 1256 A.D. found on the floor of the Kamakshi Amman temple refers to the gift of land to the palli of the Mangadu.[12]

Kuvanur

An interesting Jaina inscription palaeographically assigned to the 10th century A.D. is reported from Kuvanur, Tirukkovilur taluk, Viluppuram District.[13] This inscription is found engraved on either side of a pillar. This is a memorial pillar referred to in the inscription as panittari.It states that the pillar was erected in memory of a Jaina monk Kuppai Piramani, who died after fasting for twelve days. It indicates the practice of sallekana even during 10th and 11th centuries AD by strictly adhering to the codes and conducts of Jainism which was prevalent in this region from the 3rd or 4th century A.D. Besides this, the term, Kaipani also occurs in the inscription. This interesting term reveals its close association with the Jaina tradition, particularly on the last day of the Sallekana. Interestingly, this Jaina tradition is also

depicted in symbolic manner in another stone slab very near to this pillar inscription. Generally, piramani is the suffix of a Jain or saint who is well-versed in sastras and mantras. So, this person Kuppai might have been well-versed in all Jaina moral codes.

Uranitangal

An inscription palaeographically assigned to the 9th - 10th century A.D. is noticed infront of a rectangular seat carved on the floor of a cave at Uranitangal, Gingee taluk of Tiruvannamali district.[14] The cave contains 18 stone-beds cut at different places. Except two of them, others have pillow-lofts. From this it can be inferred that this cave had been used by a number of Jaina monks. The label inscription containing the name Parasenarvaru, may be a chief of the monks.

Vadugapatti

Two Vatteluttu inscriptions were found at Vadugapatti, which is located at the 25th km on Madurai - Dindigul road, Madurai district,[15] They are palaeographically dated to 11th century A.D. One of these inscriptions found engraved on the back side of the image of a Thirthankara refers to the renewal of an endowment and restoration of a tank which were not utilised for a long time in the name of Vardhamanar in the village Malaikkulam alias Manasidhanallur (modern Vadugapatti) in Paganur kurram. This endowment is entrusted to Aththanis who served as the body guards of the guilds Tisaiyairam. Undoubtedly, this place was once a mercantile settlement in Paganurkurram of Pandya country. The place name Pakanur already occurs in the 2nd century B.C. Tamil Brahmi inscription of

Kongarpuliyankulam. This place is identified with modern Cholavandan. The Aththanis are the same as the Aththigosattar i.e. a group of security guards of elephant force who usually gave protection to the merchants during the medieval period. From this one can infer the close association of Aththanis with the Jaina merchants.

Kulattur

An inscription of Pandya king Emmandalamum Kondaruliya Kulasekara's 20th regnal year (1288 A.D.) found on the wall of the Vishnu temple at Kulattur, Aruppukkottai taluk, Virudhunagar district, records the gift of land granted to the Vishnu temple.[16] Incidently, this inscription mentions a Jaina temple called Virpori Virapperumpalli and its pallichandam lands were also measured and marked with the boundary stones by the members of Ur assembly. The Pallichandam lands of the Jaina temple according to this epigraph, were situated at a place known as Pallerichchal, adjacent to Kulattur. The Pulankurichchi inscription also mentions a place called Pachcherichal. So the terms pallerichchal and pachcherichal are very close to the Jaina tradition and it needs further research. However, the Pandya inscription clearly points out the existing and living tradition of Jaina worship even during the 13th and 14th centuries. The Jaina temple referred to above does not exist now. However, two images of Tirthankaras which once adorned the temple, are now found near the local tank.

The Jaina temple Virpori Virapperumpalli was named after Virpori i.e. the security guards carrying bows and arrows and these armed men accompanied traders and their merchandise and offered protection to them from theft and robbery. So, the temple seems to

have been built by this Virpori regiment and it was named after Virpori. This Virpori regiment might be the same regiment, ulmunaiyar mentioned in the Pulankurichchi inscription along with the Aththigosathar. So the terms Virpori and ulmunaiyar occuring in both the inscriptions may be taken for the regiments with weapons of archery.

Tirukogarnam

An inscription of 13th century A.D. has been found on the base of the Mangalanayaki (Parvati) shrine in the Gokenesvara temple at Tirukogarnam, Pudukkottai district.[17] Like the previous inscription it also records some land grant to the temple. While registering the boundaries it also mentions the pallichandam land as one of the boundaries of the gifted land to the Sivabrahmanas of the temple. This pallichandam land should have belonged to the Jaina temple at Sadaiyarpparai on the outskirts of Tirukogarnam. During the 13th century A.D. this Jaina temple was known as Perunarkilli Cholapperumpalli to which some lands were also donated in the year 1217 A.D.[18] Though the temple is completely ruined the principal image of Tirthankara is still under worship by the local people mistaking it as folk deity.

From the above, it is clear that from the 3rd or 2nd century B.C. to 13th and 14th centuries A.D. there was a continuous occupancy of Jainism all over Tamilnadu, which was very active in those days. Jaina faith was patronised by the royal people, chieftains, officials, merchants, merchant-guards, devaradiyars - male and female irrespectively also of other faiths.

Foot-Notes

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10

JAINA MANUSCRIPTS

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Jaina religion is one of the cultural streams of the ancient and enduring civilization of the Indian sub-continent. Tamil Nadu in peninsular India had been the seat of Jaina religion a few centuries before the advent of the Christian era. This region has fostered many religions, their institutions, philosophy and literary traditions, even those of North Indian origin. No doubt, Jainism has a chequered history in the land of the Tamils, but it continues to flourish in some pockets of the region, particularly in Northern Tamilnadu.

Of all the sources that help us in reconstructing the study of Jaina Archaeology in Tamilnadu, Manuscripts form a class among themselves.

Many manuscripts of Jaina religion in Tamilnadu have literary tinge. But those manuscripts included in the Mackenzie collections have a bearing on the socio-cultural aspects of the history of Jainism in Tamilnadu. This study is mainly confined to the Jaina Manuscripts of Mackenzie collections.

A good number of manuscripts bearing on the history and culture of south India were collected by Col. Colin Mackenzie between 1810-1815, when he was the Surveyor-General in Madras under the English East India company. Mackenzie was one of the East India Company's servants who 'did not tread the golden path to fortune as many of their counterparts made', but chose as his own, prompted by the love of learning, 'to discover the east'. Infact, he was one of the distinguished men of a brilliant galaxy of Indologists 'on whom the unknown Orient exercised a strange fascination'.

Historical manuscripts relating to South India in the Mackenzie collections have been edited by Dr. T.V. Mahalingam, and their summaries are given in a book form. The Manuscripts are in different languages of the region, namely, Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada. They are divisible into different groups such as Local tracts (kaifiyats), Local history, Biographies, Puranic and legendary accounts of places and men, and Jaina literature etc. The accounts provided in the Mackenzie manuscripts, relating to Jaina religious history, are vitiated by references to legends. The manuscripts deal with a variety of themes. They enlist the Jaina centres of Tamilnadu, interesting accounts of the migrants, their influences on the land of the Tamils, the conflicts among the sects, their temples and monastic establishments. The Myths and legends as an extended part of oral traditions form the main content of these manuscripts. There may be reason for doubting the authenticity of the information contained in the Mackenzie manuscripts, 'for his collections are generally based on secondhand traditions and unverified reports'. Though the data given in the manuscripts are based on oral and secondary

traditions, in all probability, they have been freshingly and interestingly carried on to the posterity by a group of religious community. It is a collection of rural folk traditions. Moreover, the keen interest evinced by the Western Orientalists and Indian scholars testify to the importance of these documents. As pointed out already, 'their testimony may be used as circumstantial evidence calculated to supplement the results arrived at from other sources'. The data diligently interpreted would reveal the history of Jainism in the proper perspective.

JAINA CENTRES

The Jainas enjoyed a great patronage in South India from the beginning of the Christian era down to the end of the 12th century A.D. Their continuance even in the late medieval period in Tamilcountry is also vouchsafed by myths and legends preserved in the manuscripts. One of the records (Ms no: 69) mentions a list of Jaina villages, most of which preserve Jaina heritage till date. Some of these are already noticed as historical centres with inscriptions and monumental remains.' The Jains were numerically strong and flourishing in the Chingleput (now Kancheepuram) and Arcot (now, Tiruvannamalai & Vellore) districts in the heyday of their ascendancy in the Tamil country'. It has been noticed that, to-day, a good number of Jainas are living mostly in the same region with the headquarters of the Pontiff at Cittamur in Viluppuram district. Chittamur, Koliyanallur, Tirunarungondai, Tondur, Perumandur, all in Viluppuram district; Tirumalai, Ponnur, Odalavadi, Tachambadi, Venkunram and Karandai in Tiruvannamalai district; Pulal, Pundi, Tirakkol (Ms 11 Sec 12) Punadagai, Mylapore and Tirruparutikkunram (Ms 22, Sec 3) were all important Jaina centres in Kanchipuram district. The above centres continue and preserve the Jaina heritage by

either being the settlement, temple centre, monastic centre or known for myths and legends.

CHITTAMUR

Chittamur, 12kms. east of Gingee in Viluppuram district, was an important Jaina centre (Ms 11, Sec 6; 12 sec 3, 7 and 12). The Jaina monuments and monastic tradition of this centre are of greater interest to any student of Jainology. The manuscripts refer to the matha and its Pontiff, its influence in the region and its services to the people. Being one of the well preserved Jaina centres, the temple and matha there are historically significant. The Malainatha temple accommodating a boulder containing images of Tirthankaras, was known by names Kattampalli and Tiruvurampalli (ARE: 201, 202 /1984) (S.I.I., Vol. VII, 829) and the Parsvanatha temple was called Singapurinatha temple. Both the temples flourished during the Chola and Vijayanagar times. Artistic traditions of the place is revealed by the excellent stone sculptures and metal images of Jaina deities. The stone chariot, at this place, betrays Vijayanagar workmanship.

The monastic tradition of Chittamur built since the closing years of the 15th century was sequel to the activities of the Pontiff Virasenacharya. Originally, a native of Uppuvelur, near Tindivanam, Virasenacharya had the opportunity to reorganise the community at Chittamur after the decline of the original Jina Kanchi matha at Tirupparuttikunram (western part of Kanchipuram). Since then it has been the headquarters of the Digambara sect in Tamil Nadu. Virasenacharya's community works were painted in the Jaina temple at Perumandur near Tindivanam. Many of the paintings, assignable to the 18th century,

depicted themes of Virasena securing ascetics and monastics for the matha (A.Ekambaranathan:1996). This matha had a well preserved textual tradition which includes Jaina works in Sankskrit, Prakrit and Tamil (Ms.no.132).

The establishment of the Chittamur monastic organisation was a sequel to the order of the Nayaka chieftain which led to the exodus of most of the Jainas from Gingee area. The legend goes that one of the Nayaka chieftain Venkatapati Nayak administering the Gingee area during the last quarter of the 15th century ordered for the persecution of the Jainas who refused to offer a bride from their community to the Nayak chief. Those Jainas who chose to stay in the region pursued their religion secretly inorder to escape the wrath of the Nayaka. During this period of religious oppression, a Jaina adherent from Uppuvelur made his way to the sacred centre of Sravanabelgola in Karnataka where he studied the Jaina Agamas and became a monk under the initiated name Virasenacharya. When normalcy was restored in Gingee area, Virasenacharya returned to Chittamur and propagated the Jaina doctrines by establishing the matha (Ms.no 11,Sec.2,12:5)

LEGEND OF TIRUNARUNGONDAI

The legend around the Parsvanatha temple at Tirunarungondai near Ulundurpet in Viluppuram district carries down the traditions relating to Appar and his association with this Jaina centre. One of the manuscripts gives an account of the Jaina temple of the place. Natural caverns with beds are found amongst a chain of hillocks near the village. Epigraphs reveal the existence of two Jaina shrines in this village dedicated to Chandranatha and Parsvanatha and they

are referred to as the Melirpalli and Kilappalli (ARE: 306/1939-40and 383/1902).

Tradition lays down that a hunter while digging up of finding edible roots, struck with his axe on the buried image of Parsva. A sudden flash of light that emitted from the image made him lose his eye sight. The hunter lamented for his mistake and prayed to Lord Parasvanatha to restore his eye sight. His sight was restored and he was delighted on finding the image of Parsva. The local tribes constructed a new temple at the top of Tirunarungondai hill and installed the image. The image of Parsva in low relief is assignable to the 9th centu;ry A.D. The nature of fissure on the rock extending over the knee of the image is related to the above legend of hunters striking the ground for edible roots. In all probability the fissure is said to have been caused by a lightening bolt (A.Ekambaranathan:1996).

The Parsvanatha of Tirunarungondai temple is locally known as Appandar which may well represent the traditional association of Appar with Tirunarungondai. The legend connected with Appandainathar needs the attention of the Archaeologists and Historians. Appar, on his expulsion from the Jaina Sangha, became a Saiva follower and swore enemity towards the Jainas. He is alleged to have worked for their destruction and to have converted many Jaina temples into Saiva ones. Tradition avers that he lost his eye sight on his arrival at Tirunarungondai. He was miraculously cured and got restored his eye sight as a sequel to his worship of the Jina. He also got reconverted to Jainism and the Saiva centres were brought back to the fold of Jainism. Incidentally the presiding deity of Tirunarungondai came to be called Appandar and

Appandainatha, 'the one who blessed Appar'. Appar's reconversion to Jainism aroused the wrath of Saivites and he is believed to have been thrown into a lime kiln and killed by Sambandar and Sundarar (Ms.19,6). This account is reminiscent of the stories of persecution narrated in Periyapuranam and other works. It has already been pointed out that such an account is no doubt the outcome of sectarian rivalry that gained momentum among the Jaina votaries in later times. Further, Sundarar was not the contemporarian of Appar. Infact, the consensus of most of the scholars is that Appar, initially a Jaina follower, headed the Jain monastery at Patalipura (Cuddalore) under his ascetic name Dharmasena. Only later, he turned to Saivism and strengthened that religion undermining the influence of Jainism. In the process, his monastic experience made him to establish a Saiva monastery (C.K.Sivaprakasam: 1983).

OTHER JAINA CENTRES

The manuscripts of Mackenzie collections refer to a number of important Jaina centres in Tiruvannamalai district which abound in Jaina vestiges. Tirumalai in Polur taluk is one such centre which was originally a palllichandam also known as Vaigavur (ARE : 66/1907). Two Jaina Tirthankaras, namely, Mallinatha and Nemisvara are very much worshipped here. The temple, here, originally known as Kundavai Jinalaya (S.I.I. Vol I, 98) received patronage from Kundavai, the elder sister of Rajaraja I. It is a known centre of Chola art with excellent carvings and paintings. It was already a flourishing centre during the reign of Krishna III, the Rashtrakuta king. The matha herein was affiliated to the institution of Sravana Belagola. A number of palm leaf manuscripts in possession of the Jainas of

Tirumalai cover a variety of subjects like poetry, grammar and rules for monks and laymen.

The Jaina temple of Kanakamalai Alvar at Ponnur of the same district contains Pandya and Vijayanagar stone records(ARE : 415,416,417/1928-29). Here, the cult of Jvalamalini was popularized by one Helacharya who is assigned to the 9th century A.D. His teachings were later codified by Indranandi Yogindra in his work Jvalamalini Kalpa. Yet another centre of Jaina influence in the same district is Karandai adjacent to Tirupparambur (Ms 19, Sec.3). The temple, herein, dedicated to Kunthu Tirthankara with a separate shrine for Vardhamana flourished in the Chola period and it was known as Virarajendrapperumpalli. (ARE : 129,131,132,135, 141/1939-40). By about 1747A.D., the gopura of this temple was renovated (ARE : 136/1939-40).

Pulal, near Chennai, said to be the capital of the Kurumbas, had been a Jaina centre since early times. It has been pointed out that the Kurumba tribes of Karnataka after migrating southwards established their power in Tondaimandalam region which was divided into 24 political units. They become Jaina converts and later on built many Jaina temples. This place was a Jaina centre with a temple dedicated to Adinatha in the Chola period. (A. Ekambaranathan: 1996). Now it has been completely renovated in the Nagara style by the Svetambara Jains.

The Ponninatha temple at Pundi is one of the famous Jaina temples in Tondaimandalam. The legend of the temple (Ms 11,Sec 9) relates the origin of the temple to two hunters and a monk in severe austerity, namely, Arhadeva. More than the reliability of the legend, the importance of it lies in its preservation of the name of the local Sambuvaraya Chieftain called

Viravira who was instrumental in building the temple at the instance of a Jaina teacher. (ARE: 58/1900; S.I.I., Vol VII,no.62).

MYLAPORE LEGEND

That Mylapore in the heart of Chennai city was once a seat of Jaina religion is evidenced by a manuscript (Ms.12,Sec.2). Padmanathapuram or Vamanathapuram as it was then known, Mylapore has an interesting legend. It is said that a Jaina ascetic once predicted that the city was going to be engulfed by the sea within three days and hence a new city known as Mayilamanagar was built with five Jaina temples. It was the irony of fate that the second city was also engulfed by the sea and so the people had to shift still further interior. The original Neminatha icon of the temple at Mayilamanagar has since been established in the Parsvanatha temple at Chittamur (Ms 12 Sec 2). During the period of the Cholas, Mylapore became a Saivite centre. However, the Jaina temple existed until the 15th and 16th centuries in Mylapore. The Mayilaman of the local tradition, in all probability, is a legendary figure not to be noticed in any dynastic history of Tamilnadu. The legend is very much relevant to the sea erosion of the place.

TIRUPPARUTIKUNRAM

Tirupparutikunram, a prominent Jaina centre, which figures in one of the Mackenzie manuscripts (Ms 22 Sec 3) is today represented by Jinakanchi near Kanchipuram on the right bank of the Vegavati river. Infact, this centre had a regular colony of the Jainas from very early times. It was one of the four Vidyasthanas of the Digambaras. The two temples of this centre dedicated to Vardhamana and

Chandraprabha flourished from the times of the Pallavas down to the period of the Vijayanagara. This place provides a good scope for the study of art history as evidenced by sculptures and paintings. It has been pointed out that palm leaf manuscripts in the possession of the priests of the temples supplement our knowledge of Jaina teachers and of Jain iconography. Scholars like T.N.Ramachandran had made an extensive study of this centre in his work known as Tirupparuttikunram and its temples.

SAGE AKALANKA AND YAKSHI CULT

The legends connected with a Jaina king Himasitala and a Jaina sage Akalanka find their place in Mackenzie Manuscripts (Ms no 11 Sec 5 and no 68). There is also a mention about the migration of a group of Jainas to Tondaimandalam region. Himasitala, the Jaina king of North India along with a large number of Jaina families migrated to the south and they were instrumental in the reclamation of Dandaranya (Tondaimandalam) for agriculture and trade. It is also said that they established the capital and religious centre of the newly developed territory at Kanchipuram.

One Akalanka, a resident monk of the Buddhist monastery at Alividaitangi, disagreed with their teachers and engaged in the study of Jaina Agamas at Sravanabelagola (Ms no 14.3). On his return as a devoted Jaina disciple defeated the Buddhist in a discourse in the court of Himasitala. In the process, he had the grace of Yakshi Dharmadevi only after severe austerities at Karantai temple. Subsequently, he became the Pontiff of the Jaina monastery at Kanchipuram. Though the king mentioned in the legend is not to be found in the genealogy of the kings

of Tondaimandalam, the reference to Yakshi Dharmadevi is of socio-cultural interest. Infact, a separate shrine for the same yakshi finds a place within the Kunthunatha temple complex and it receives special worship on all Sundays.

The popularity of another Yakshi cult is also known from Ponnur (Svarnapura) near Vandiwash. The local Jaina temple of Kanakamalai Alvar which flourished in the Pandya and Vijayanagar periods had been a centre of Yakshi worship, especially Jvalamalini whose cult was popularized by one Helacharya. It has been pointed out that Helacharya probably belonged to the 9th century A.D. His teachings were later on codified by one Indranandi Yogindar in his work Jvalamalini Kalpa (ARE: 1928-29, pt II, para 73&74). Another important centre in Andhra Pradesh figuring in two manuscripts (Ms no 199 and 217) was also the seat of the cult of Jvalamalini.

A discussion on myths relating to Yakshi cult will not be out of context here. Yakshis were folk deities in the early peninsular India and they got introduced in Jaina pantheon as attendant deities of Tirthankaras. They gained prominent position from the seventh century A.D. Through the ages myths developed around the worship of Yakshis, particularly Ambika and Jvalamalini yakshis. Ambika, the most popularly worshipped yakshi of the Digambara faith is the attendant deity of Neminatha, the 22nd Tirthankara. Kannada myths connected with her came to be localized and associated with Tirumalai in Polur taluk. Tradition goes that Ambika Yakshi of Tirumalai uninterruptedly fed as many as 8000 monks when there was a large scale migration of Jaina monks from North India to South India. It has been opined that this myth had taken place consequent to the

installation of an image of Ambika at Tirumalai in the 10th Century A.D. Another local myth connects Ambika yakshi with the renowned saint Akalankaracharya, and Karanthai, 19kms from Kanchipuram.

Jvalamalini, the yakshi of Chandraprabha (8th Tirthankara) is connected with Ponnur near Vandavasi. It is believed that Helacharya, a renowned monk of Dravida Sangha, was able to ward off the evil influences of a Brahma-rakshasa who had afflicted his lady disciple. This myth is considered a localized adaptation from the Kannada treatise Jvalamalini Kalpa. (939 A.D.). However, the localization of the Kannada myth gained prominence around the 18th century A.D. with the rise of popularity of the cult of Jvalamalini amidst Digambaras of Tamilnadu. It led to the proliferation of her shrines separately in places like Chittamur, Pundi, Mannargudi, Dipankudi, Karunttattankudi etc, after the 18th century A.D. Scholars have pointed out that 'Yakshi myths acted as catalysts not only to popularize their cults, but also to gain a wider social basis of Jainsim (A.Ekambaranathan :2002).

YAPANIYAS, DRAVIDASANGHA

A discussion on the origin of the other sects among the Jainas is noticed in one of the manuscripts(Ms no 67). It is based on Pancamargotpatti and made from the Digambara point of view. Mention is made of Yapaniya and Dravida sangha. The Yapaniyas flourished in the Tamilcountry from atleast 9th century A.D., but originally they were active in Karnataka from the fifth century A.D. The Dravida Sangha is known to have been founded by one Vajranandi at Madurai. A network of mathas all over

the region drew their inspiration from the sangha at Madurai. A very few manuscripts are on the customs and manners of the Jainas. (Ms 11, Sec 4) and their cosmology (Ms 11,sec 1).

To conclude, the myths and legends revealed by Mackenzie manuscripts originated at one or the other point of time in the medieval period acted as catalysts to strengthen and continue the Jaina traditions when Jainism itself went through a chequered period. By about 8th-9th centuries A.D. Jainism had a second lease of life in Tamil country which led to the growth of Jainism on Bhakti lines. During the period of political flux and socio-cultural lull, Jainism received a check in its very existence. The 15th - 16th centuries and later period witnessed the growth of further legends leading to the concomitant development so as to strengthen the already existing Jaina centres. The migratory forces in terms of ideas and followers, the influence of Brahmanical sects and the concept of localization of cults were the factors in the rise of myths and legends. After all these myths and legends had played the role of consolidating the social basis of Jainism in Tamilnadu.

It will not be out of context, if the following note is made on the preservation of Jain manuscripts. As all of us know Jaina manuscripts, many of them rare in character, are strewn all over India and are found in the custody of recognized institutions and in the hands of private collectors, at time, in the possession of unknown individuals. Jain Heritage centres new services had given an appeal to all those concerned with it:

'On the occasion of the 2600th Janmakalyan of Bhagwan Mahavira, the Government of India has undertaken a project to preserve and record the old

Jaina manuscripts. These recorded manuscripts would be converted into the CD form and preserved in the National Archives. In connection with this, it has constituted five nodal centres in different parts of India. The National Institute of Prakirt studies and Research at Sravanabelgola is one such nodal centre that has undertaken the work for the South Indian states of Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Andhra and Kerala. Sri Charukeerthi Bhattaraksa Maharaj of Sravanabelgola has urged the people to donate the manuscripts for compilation and thereby help in the process.

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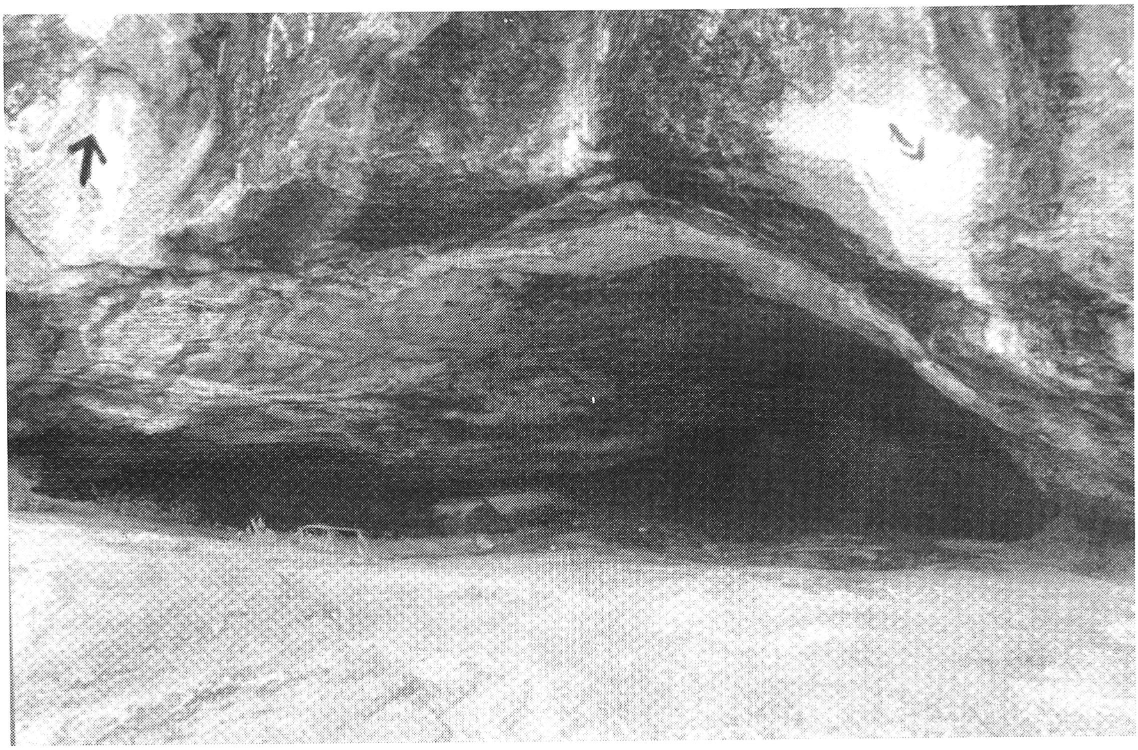
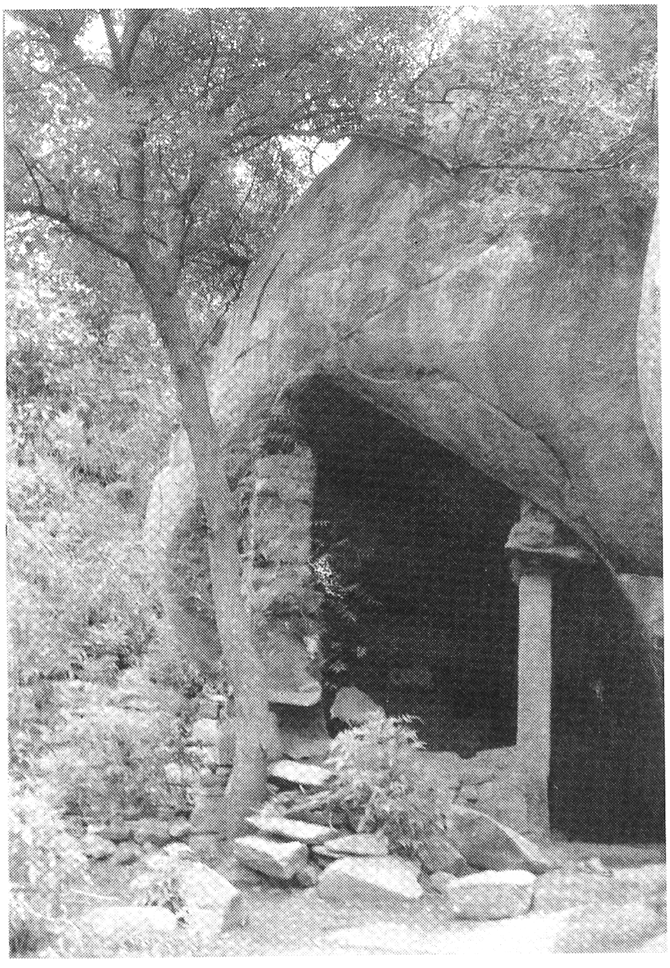
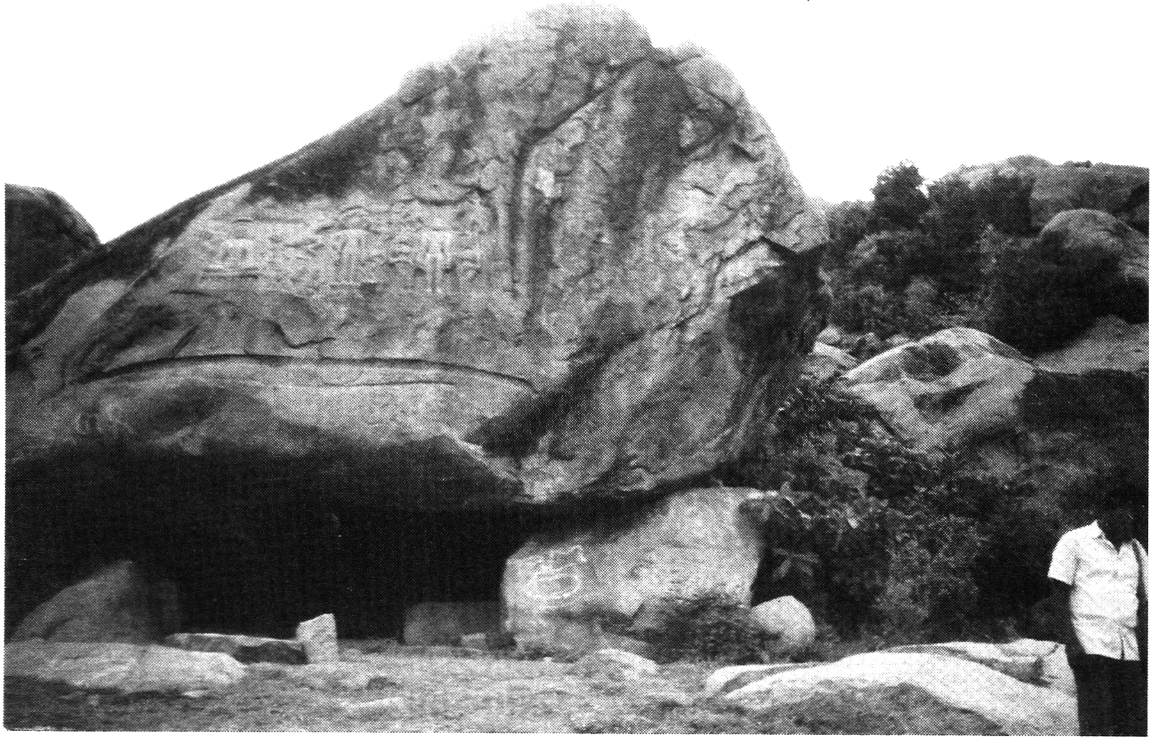


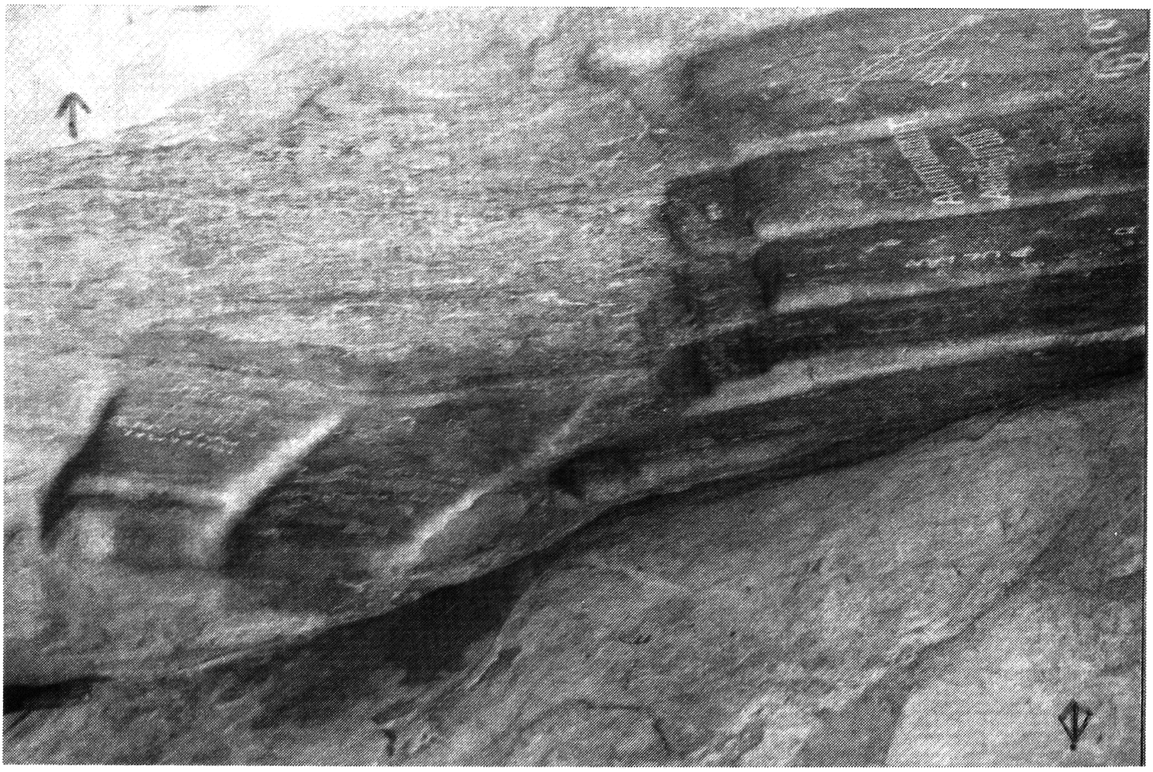
Cave - Kalugumalai



Cave - Vallimalai

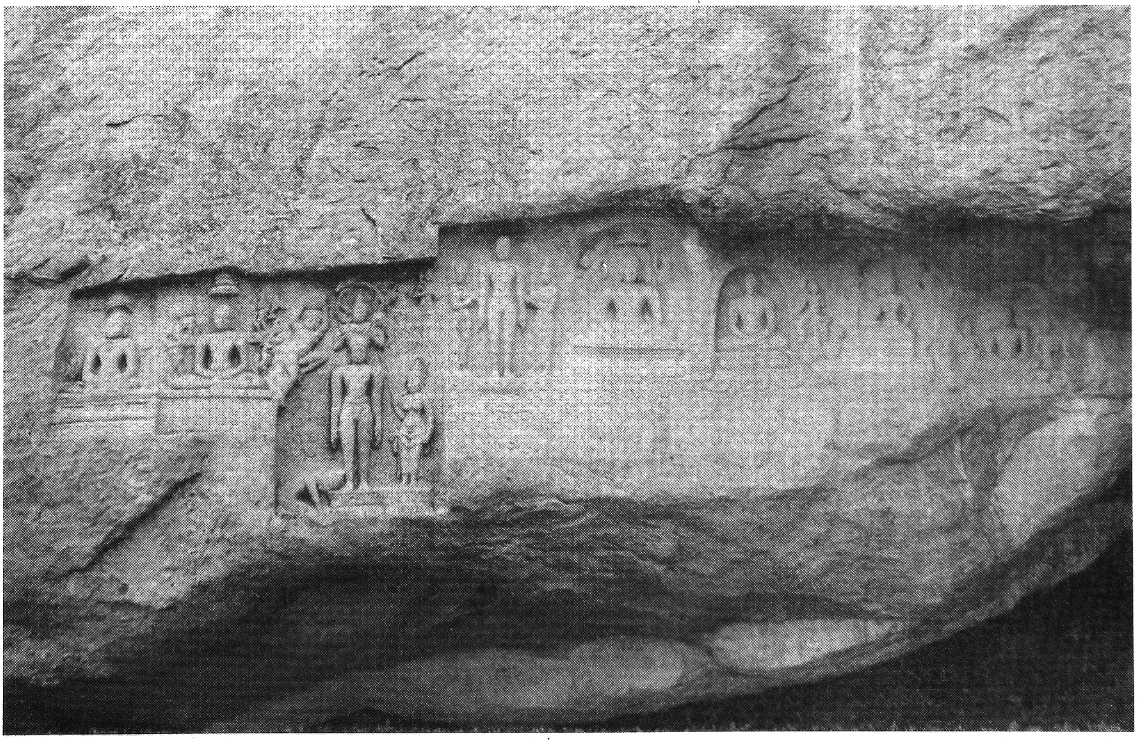


Cave - Siyamangalam

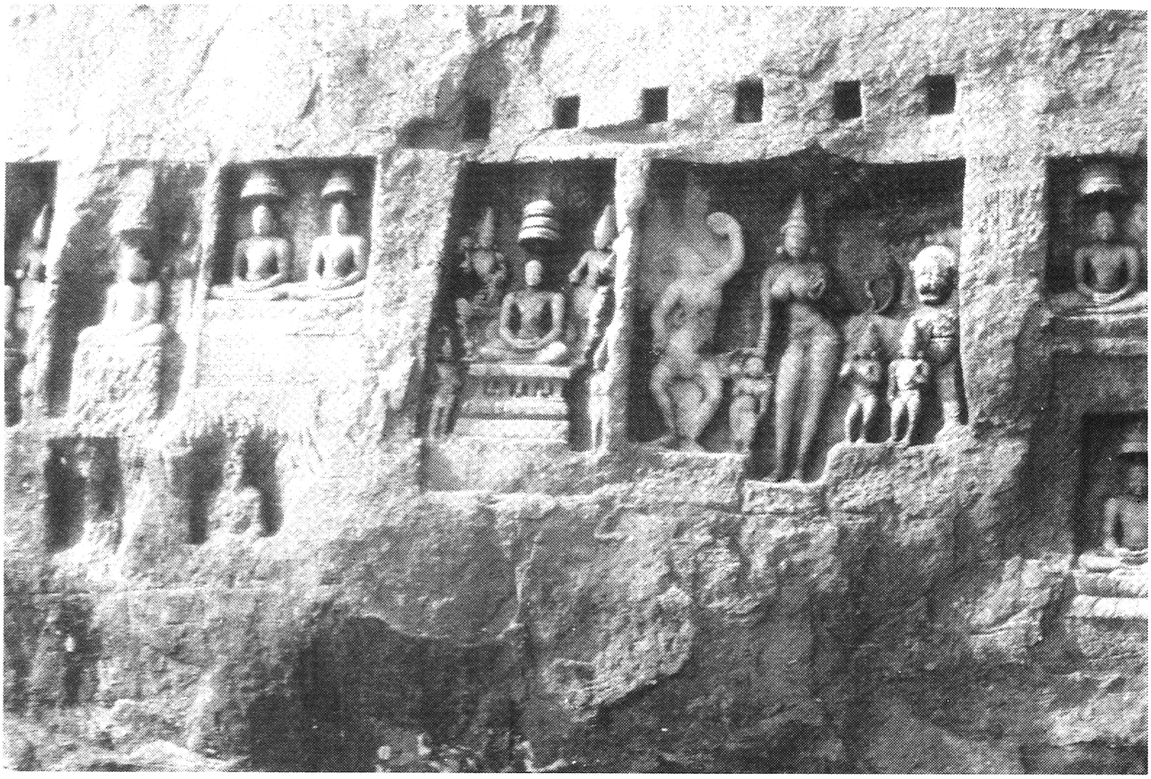


Stone Beds and Brahmi Inscriptions - 2nd Cent. B.C.
Muttupatti.

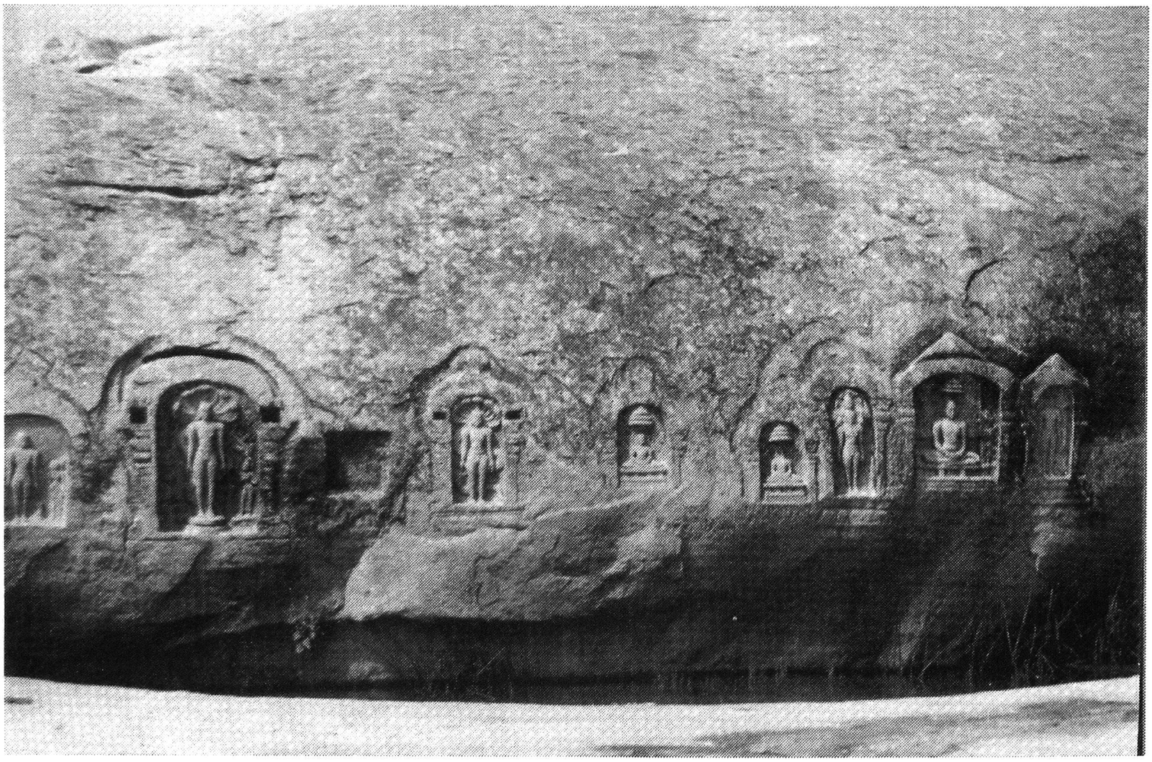
Brahmi Inscription - 2nd Cent.B.C. Tirupparankunram



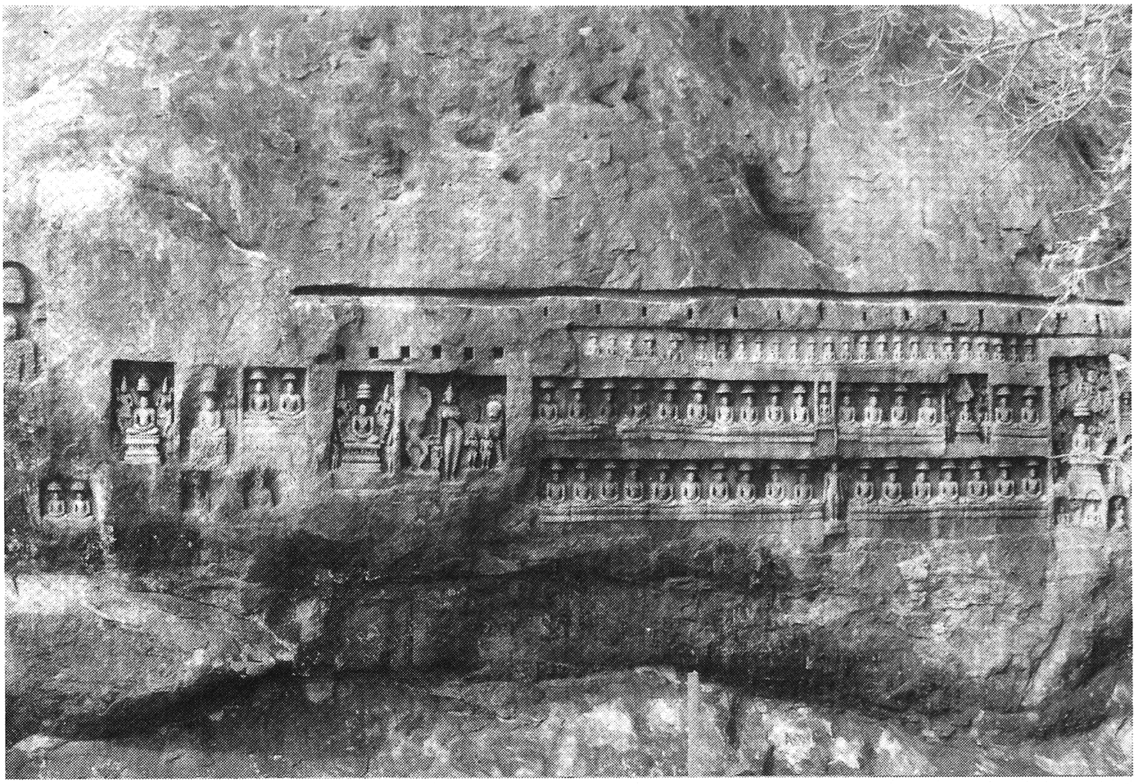
Rock-Cut Sculptures - Anaimalai - 9th Cent. A.D.



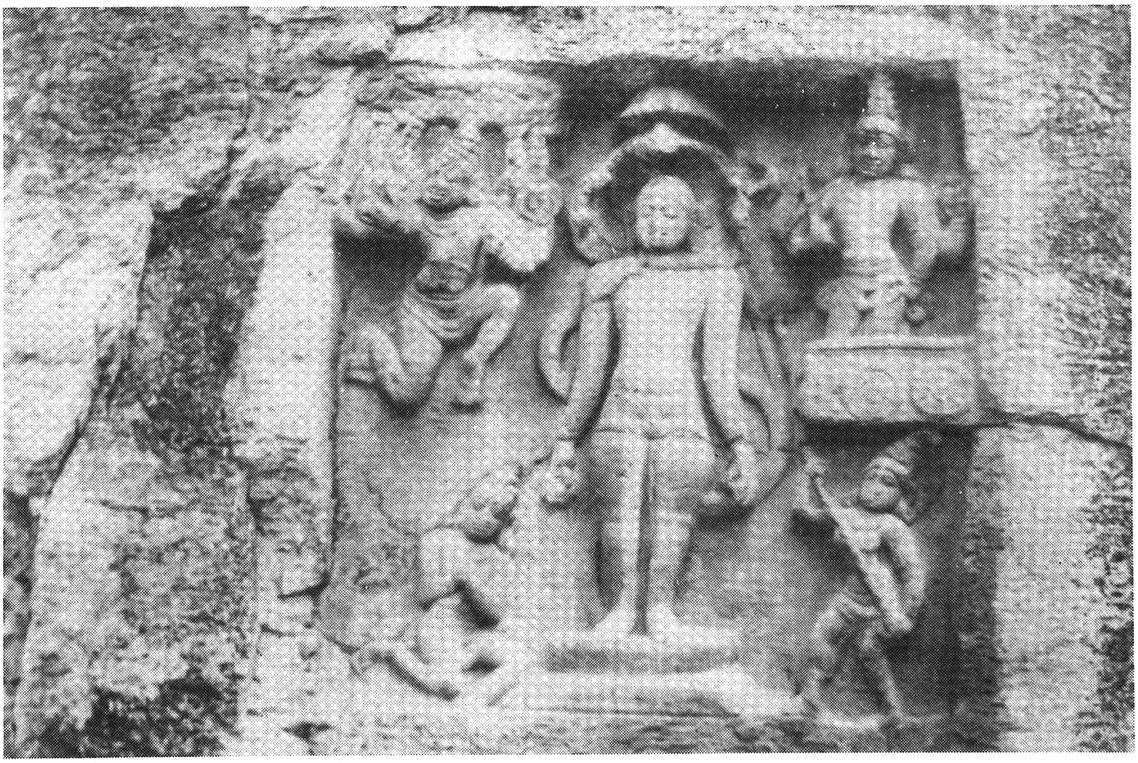
Rock-Cut Sculptures - Kalugumalai - 9th Cent. A.D.



Rock-Cut Sculptures - Kilakuyil Kudi - 9th Cent. A.D.



Rock-Cut Sculptures - Kalugumalai - 9th Cent. A.D.



Parsvanatha - Rock-Cut Sculpture
Atchippakkam - 9th Cent. A.D.

Mahavira - Venkunram
7th Cent.

Mahavira - Thyagadurgam
8th Cent. A.D.

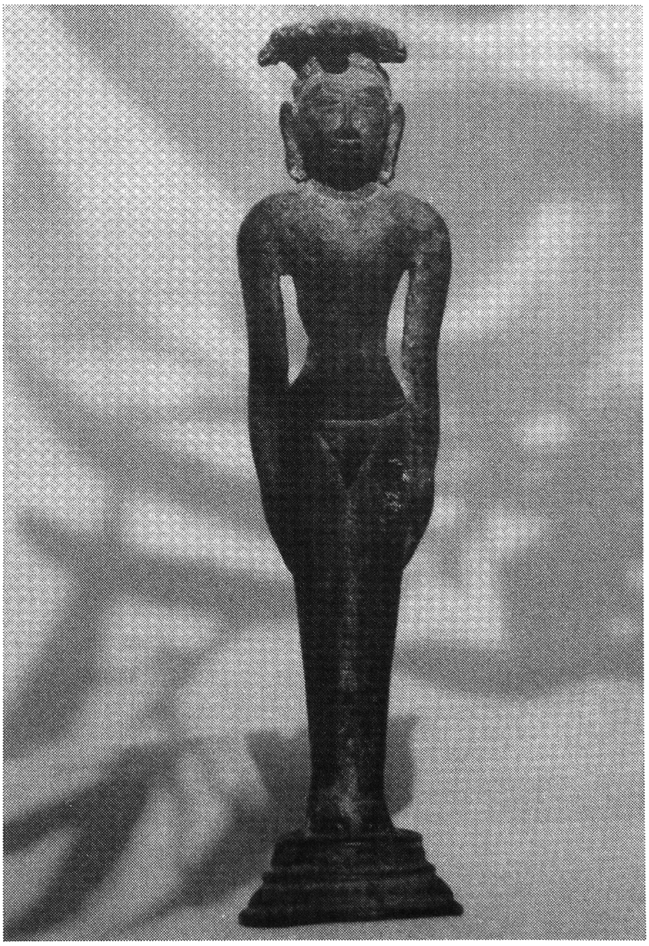
Adinatha - Ponnur
12th Cent. A.D.

Dharmanatha - Arungulam
17th Cent. A.D.

Mahavira Temple
Karanthai.

Gopura - Chittamur

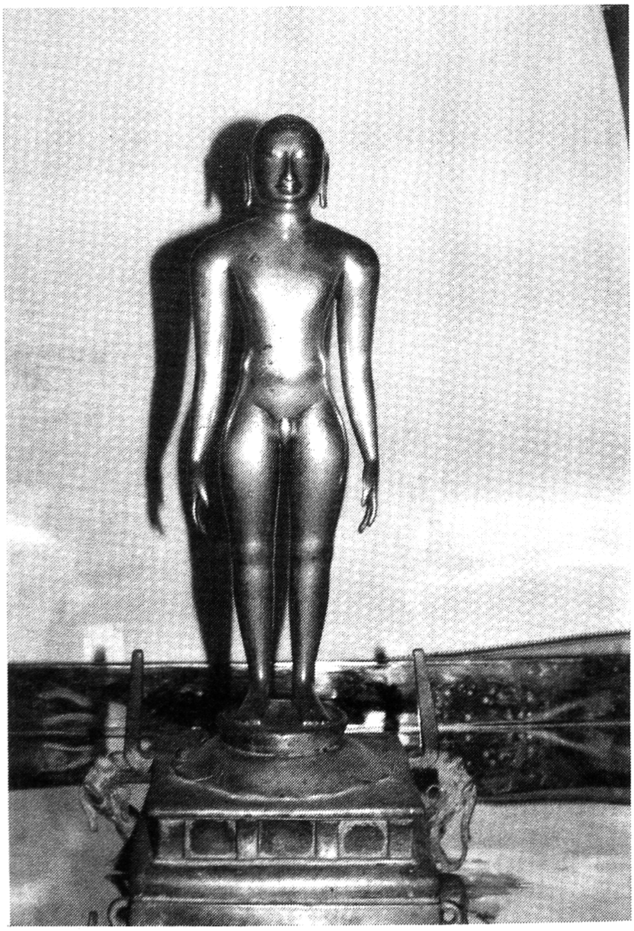
Mahavira Temple
Perumugai

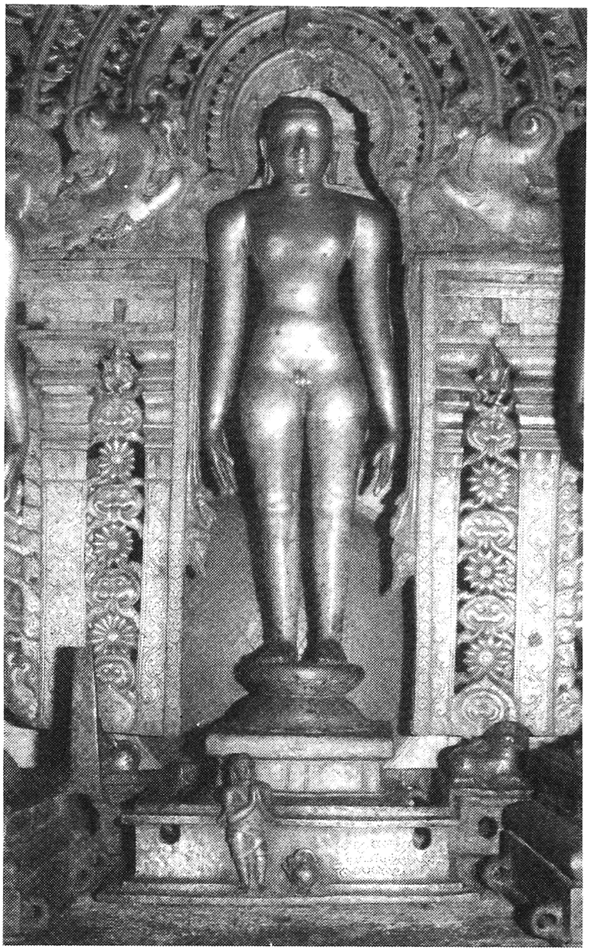


Parsva - 8th Cent. A.D.
Chennai Museum

Ambika - Tirunarungondai
10th Cent. A.D.

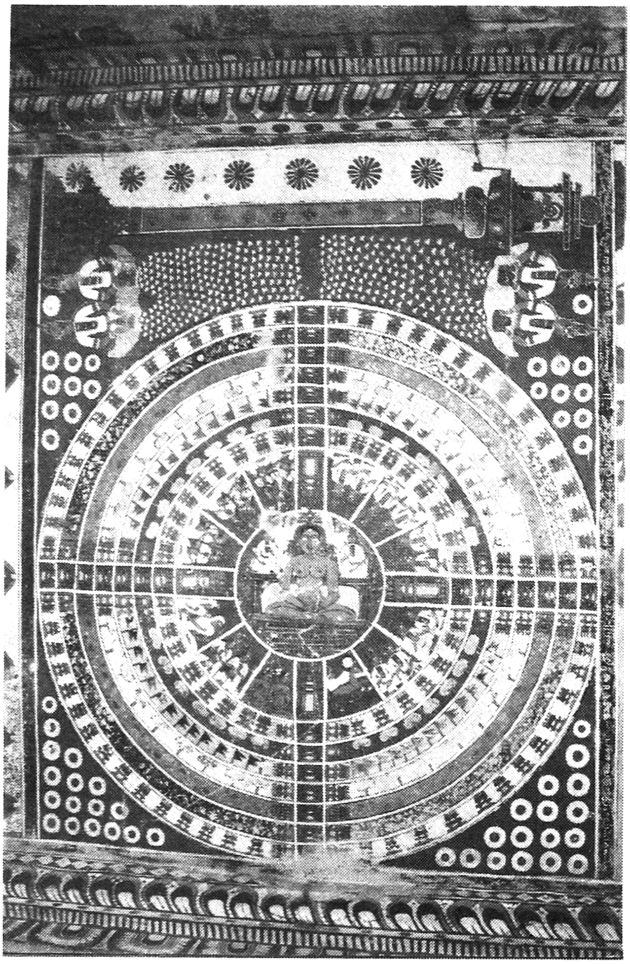
Dharmanatha - Arungulam
13th Cent. A.D.





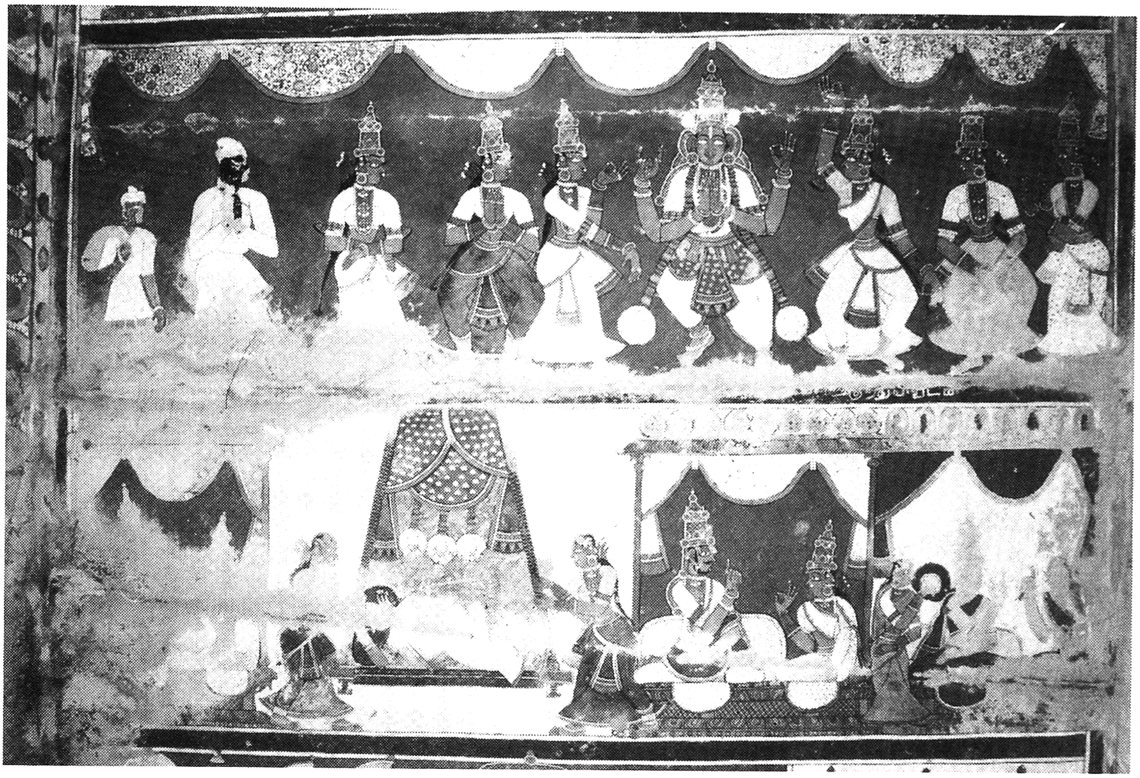
Chandranatha
Tirunarungondai
16th Cent. A.D.

Paintings. Tirupparutikunram
14th Cent. A.D.



Samavasarana
Tirupparutikunram
17th Cent. A.D.

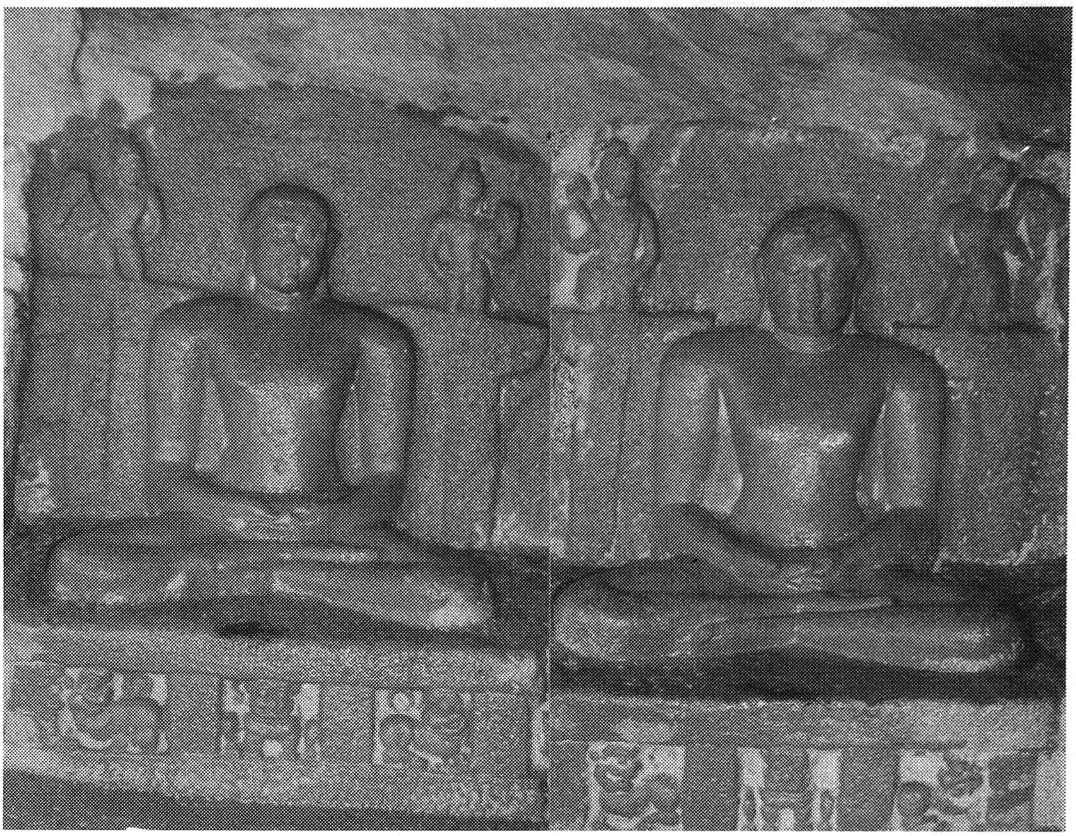
Rishaba - Life Story - Tirupparutikunram
17th Cent. A.D.



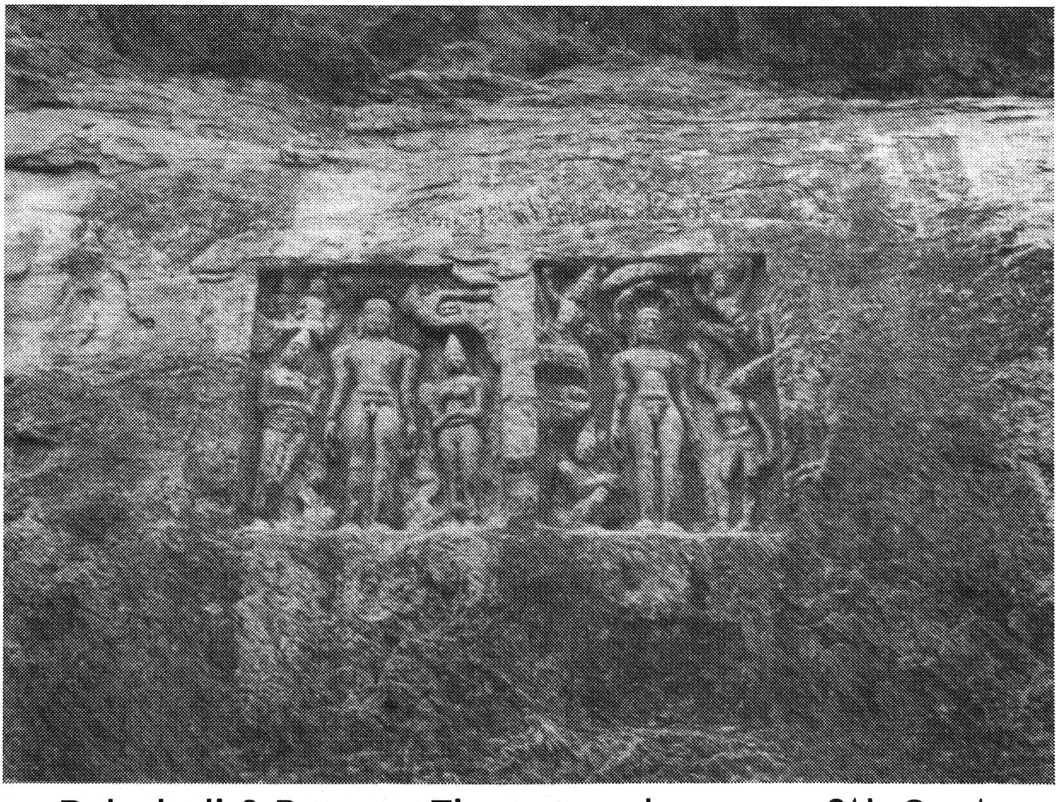
Dancing Scene - Tirupparutikunram
17th Cent. A.D.

New Brahmi inscription - Arittapatti
Courtesy - Dr. V. Vedachalam

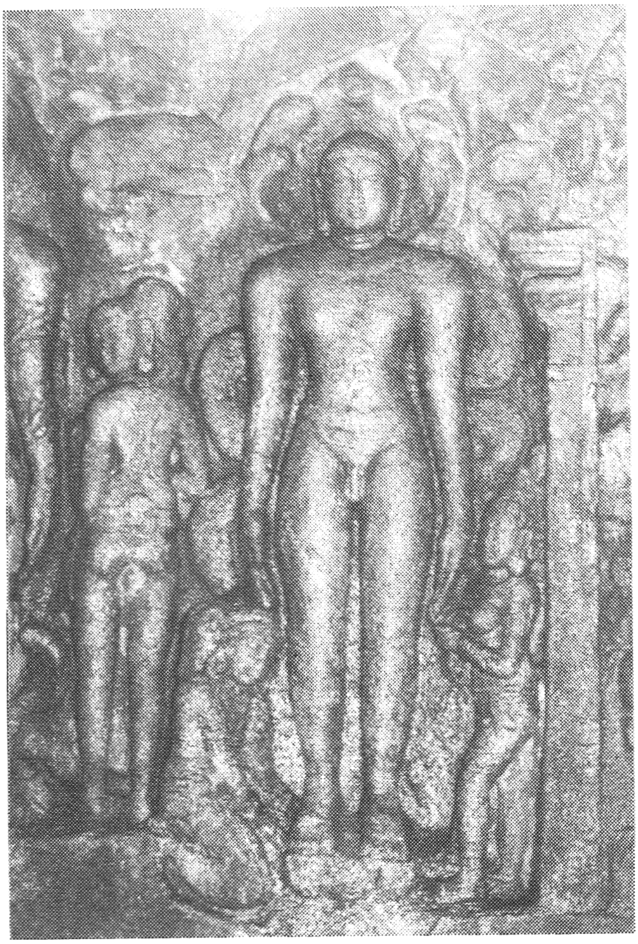
Jain Monastery - Sittamur



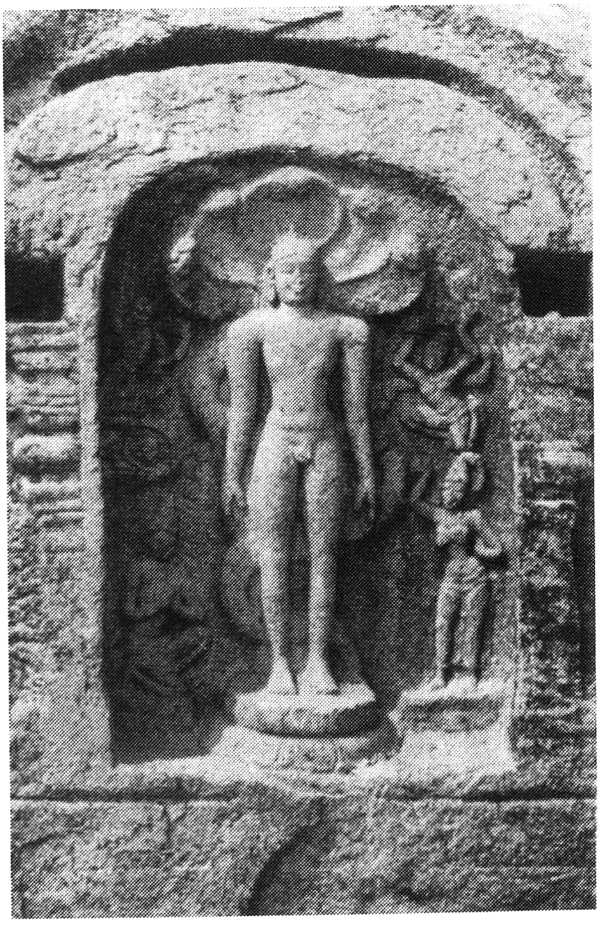
Adinatha & Mahavira - Vallimalai - 9th Cent.



Bahubali & Parsva - Tirupparankunram - 9th Cent.



Parsvanatha
Melchittamur
9th Cent.



Parsvanatha
Pechipallam
9th Cent.

Shri Bharat Varshiya Digamber Jain
(Teerth Sanrakshni) Mahasabha.